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# Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture





THE INSTITUTE is rooted in the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) who stressed, among other things, the equal validity of all religions, the potential divinity of man, and service to man as a way of worshipping God. Sri Ramakrishna's chief disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), carried far and wide these teachings which, really speaking, constitute the core of India's oldest philosophy, Vedanta. Later, in 1897, he founded, in order to propagate these ideas, a non-proselytizing religious organization, the Ramakrishna Mission, which, besides teaching Vedanta, gives concrete service to the community by running schools, colleges, hospitals, orphanages, and so on. Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission had 152 branches in India and abroad in March 1990.

## PURPOSE

ONE SUCH branch is the Institute started in 1938 as an offshoot of Sri Ramakrishna's first birth-centenary celebration held in 1936. With humble beginnings in small rented rooms in north Calcutta, the Institute has grown over the years, and the fact that it now occupies its present magnificent building (completed in 1960) in south Calcutta is a testimony to its popularity.

While culture is the Institute's specific field of study, it is not national culture alone that it studies, but that culture which is the common heritage of all mankind and to which every race and religion has made its own contributions. Such a study, the Institute believes, will provide the necessary psychological background to the cementing process which technology has initiated between the races of mankind.

## ACTIVITIES

### *Cultural Programmes*

Throughout the year the Institute has a busy schedule of lectures, debates, elocution competitions, seminars, symposia, study circles, and scripture classes, and religious

congregations, through which knowledge both modern and ancient, is imparted to the public. Devotional songs and film shows also constitute regular features of the Institute's activities all round the year.

### *Vivekananda Study Circle*

To encourage the youth to study Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature the Institute has several programmes of which the Vivekananda Study Circle is one. The Study Circle meets twice a month. The participants are also offered opportunities for field study of how the teachings of Swami Vivekananda are being implemented by the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.

### *School of Languages*

Since language is a barrier to understanding others, the Institute regards the teaching of languages as an integral part of its work in the field of intercultural exchange. The Institute's SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES, with over 4,000 students on the roll, teaches 13 languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Persian, Russian, Sanskrit, Spanish, Spoken English, and Urdu.

### *International House*

Attached to the Institute there is an INTERNATIONAL HOUSE meant for the Institute's guests and for those scholars and students who come from different parts of India as well as from abroad at the invitation of the Institute or of universities and other learned societies for study and research or simply for exchange of ideas with Indian scholars. This bringing together of scholars of different nationalities helps create a bridge that unites minds and spirits having different backgrounds.

### *Library*

To assist scholars in their work of study and research, there is at the Institute a GENERAL LIBRARY, with a reading room

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The BULLETIN is published monthly. It reproduces lectures given and papers read at the Institute. The Institute invites scholars to deliver lectures or read papers on subjects which further the purpose of the Institute and contribute to its work on the national and international levels.

The BULLETIN also carries editorial observations on matters of cultural significance, book reviews, international cultural news, and news of the activities of the Institute.

The Institute is not necessarily in agreement with the views of contributors to whom freedom of expression of opinion is given.

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# Observations

## *The Sentinels*

THEY STAND as sentinels—the mango tree and the *bel* tree at the two extremities of Belur Math. As if they are guarding the legacy of the godlike men who lived here not too long ago. It has to be saved for mankind's sake. The trees are witness to the rise and growth of the Ramakrishna Order, lovingly called by a scholar 'The Ramakrishna Empire'. Here, like the seers of old, Swami Vivekananda preached the loftiest thoughts known to man. Together with his brother-disciples, he raised a band of young men who would love truth and worship man as God. They would spearhead a world-wide movement to forge unity among mankind through love, goodwill, and friendship.

Swami Vivekananda was bursting with energy. He behaved like one possessed. Sometimes he would sit under the mango tree, sometimes under the *bel*. He was always talking, always inspiring people. He would now quote from the scriptures in support of what he was saying, next he would point to his Master Sri Ramakrishna as an illustration. He was a man in a hurry, for he knew his end was coming near. He was impatient, sometimes he was angry. He came down heavily on those who were slow, or not enthusiastic. 'Give whatever you have to give, empty yourself, and be blessed,' he would urge.

Here the trees saw Swami Vivekananda and his brother-disciples in their highest spiritual moods. If you go near fire, you feel its heat. Those who came in contact with them immediately recognized that Ramakrishna was working through them. To be with them was like being with the Master. It was an experience in itself. The whole atmosphere in the monastery was surcharged with spirituality.

You felt it as soon as you stepped on the ground of the monastery. You would ask yourself, 'Is it real, or am I dreaming?' You would come again and again. You would tell your friends about the place. They would come too, and in their turn, ask others to come. This is how the message spread far and wide. Religion is to be lived. People came and saw how it could be lived. It was something the world was waiting for.

And then fell the blow—Swami Vivekananda suddenly passed away. Some people thought the Order would collapse. Nothing of the sort happened. Swami Brahmananda took over as leader, Sri Ramakrishna had already named him as the future leader. Taking the hint Swami Vivekananda passed on his authority to him. Swami Brahmananda led by example. He himself was always in a meditative mood and he wanted the monks to spend most of their time meditating. Thus he strengthened the spiritual base of the Order. 'You can serve others if you are truly spiritual'—this was the burden of his message. By following his advice, the Order is growing from strength to strength.

Monks of the Order, however, believe that it is Mother Sarada Devi's blessings that help the Order grow. They feel it individually and collectively. The trees witnessed how Mother once came to bless the monastery and how it received her. The monastery was decorated under Swami Brahmananda's personal supervision. When Mother arrived, he stood at the head of the monks with folded hands. The monks chanted appropriate hymns. It was as if Mother Durga was coming. Mother blessed the Order. Miracles keep happening as a result.

Are not the trees lucky to witness all this?



## BHAKTI : THE VEDĀNTIC WAY PAR EXCELLENCE

DEBIPRASAD BHATTACHARYYA, M.A.

Mr Debiprasad Bhattacharyya is Reader in the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Calcutta. He delivered two lectures on the above subject in the Institute in March 1989 as the Institute's Amiyabala Datta Memorial Lecturer for 1989. They are reproduced below.

### I

It is not customary to associate *bhakti* with Vedānta; indeed, to mention the two in the same breath is likely to sound almost blasphemous in the ears of both the *bhakta* and the Vedāntin. Of course, I am using this last expression, Vedāntin, in its popular modern connotation, which has very little to do with the original and the true sense of the term; and it is this original, ancient, and legitimate sense of this much-abused term that I have in mind when I am going to speak about *bhakti* as the Vedāntic way par excellence.

To avoid misunderstanding, and a possible but unintended sense of outrage, I must make clear at the outset what I mean by Vedānta. The very fact that I feel constrained to do so shows that there is something wrong, confusing, even seriously misleading in the popular modern sense of the term, namely Advaitavāda or Māyāvāda of Śaṅkarācārya. Though unquestionably the most famous and the most brilliant, it is nevertheless an interpretation, one among several, of Vedānta, that is, the *Brahma-Sūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa.

The subject of these great *sūtras* or aphorisms is Brahnavidyā, which deals with the nature of ultimate Reality revealed in the Upaniṣads.

According to the ancient Indian philosophical tradition, these Upaniṣadic revelations constitute the highest authority on this most fundamental of all subjects, namely the nature of Reality or Brahman. The Upaniṣads, again, according to this ancient Indian tradition, are not only our ultimate source of this supreme knowledge, there is no other; they are, in other words, our only proof of the existence of Brahman. The arguments in the *Brahma-Sūtras*, cogent and important as they are, do not presume to prove the existence of Brahman, but to reconcile, harmonize, and systematize the sporadic utterances of the divine Śrutis, and thus arrive at a coherent, logically arranged formulation of Brahnavidyā.

These *sūtras*—the *Brahma-Sūtras*—constitute Vedānta-darśana, one—and, in a sense, the most important—among the famous six systems of Indian philosophy. In philosophical discourse, therefore, Vedānta means the *Brahma-Sūtras*.



same dialogue, the 'chief breath'—*mukhya prāṇa*—which sustains and moves the body is mentioned as the object of worship (*upāsya*).

It may be objected here that neither Indra as Jīva nor '*mukhya prāṇa*' is Brahman; so, why should one worship either? To this the *Sūtrakāra's* (*Sūtra*-author's) reply is: The worship (*upāsana*) of Brahman is threefold. First, Brahman is to be meditated on as the indwelling spirit of all individual souls (*Jīvas*); secondly, as the indwelling spirit of all inanimate objects like '*prāṇa*'; and finally, He is to be meditated on in His own essential nature (*svarūpa*) as beyond both Jīva and *jagat*.

This is the famous threefold worship or meditation of Brahman: '*upāsa-trai-vi-dhya*'. The point that deserves to be carefully noted here is that the first of these three aspects of meditation is essentially *Jñāna-yoga* in which the *sādhaka* (aspirant) meditates on himself as one with Brahman: *Ahaṁ brahmāsmi* (I am Brahman). *Jñāna-yoga* therefore constitutes only one of the three approaches to Brahman which together constitute the total threefold approach to Brahman.

The second meditation consists in looking upon all material objects as visible forms of the Divine, as the cosmic manifestations of Brahman, who, according to Vedānta, is the material (*upādāna*) as well as the efficient (*nimitta*) cause of the created cosmos. This is the reason why to the follower of the path of Vedānta, nothing is to be rejected as *anātman* (not Ātman); he too, like the follower of the Sāṅkhya way, must feel '*vairāgya*' (or non-attachment); but his *vairāgya* is not a negative attitude to the world, as we have noted earlier; it is a state of serene non-attachment rather than a violent aversion towards the world. For the

Vedāntic *sādhaka*, *vairāgya* is freedom from both '*rāga*' and '*dveṣa*', attachment and antipathy.

Through sustained and successful practice of these two forms of meditation or *upāsana*, the mind of the *sādhaka* gradually attains a state of complete spiritual serenity and purity called *prasāda* in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. When the mind thus becomes purified through meditating on Brahman as immanent (manifested) in the cosmos, inanimate as well as animate—*jagat* and Jīva—the *sādhaka* becomes able at last to meditate on Brahman in His own essential nature—*svarūpa*—as both omniscient and omnipotent *Īśvara* and as pure Being-Consciousness-Bliss—*Saccidānanda*. This last status of Brahman is often referred to in the Upaniṣads as '*akṣara*', the Immutable; it is the ultimate Reality, the divine Ground of all Being and the final goal of Man, his '*paramā-gaṭi*', in the language of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

It is this Brahman as '*akṣara*' who is sometimes referred to as Parabrahman or Paramātman; as such He is utterly beyond all phenomenal existence, all *guṇas* or cosmic attributes. He is therefore described, in the Upaniṣads and all our Śāstras, as '*nirguṇa*', a term which really means, it should be remarked, not 'devoid of all *guṇas*', but 'beyond all *guṇas*'—*guṇātīta*.

*Īśvara*, on the other hand, is often described as *saguna* Brahman. He, too, is transcendent like *akṣara* but is endowed with infinite divine attributes, above all, therefore, called '*sarvajña*' and '*sarvaśakti-māt*', all-knowing and all-powerful. It is He who is almost universally regarded as the supreme goal and object of worship to a *bhakta*. This view, though widely held, is not, however, correct; it is not, at any rate, in accordance with the



Vedāntic concept of *upāsana*. But in order to understand the nature of Vedāntic *upāsana*, it is necessary to have a clear and total view of the nature of Reality as revealed in the Upaniṣads, the original and ancient Vedānta.

According to Vedānta, Brahman or Ultimate Reality is Existence (*sat*), Consciousness (*cit*) and Bliss (*ānanda*). He is called '*sat*', because He alone exists, and nothing else; He is therefore One without a second (*ekamevādviṭiyam*) and '*advaita*', without a trace of dualism. Of this '*sat*', the Absolute, nothing can be predicated except that He experiences Himself as Bliss, *ānanda*—infinite, ineffable Delight which constitutes His essential nature (*svarūpa*).

When Brahman as '*sat*' experiences His *ānanda* as one and undifferentiated, without any manifestation of any kind, He is called '*akṣara*', the Immutable. This '*akṣara*', who is also called Parabrahman or Paramātmān, is, as has already been said, the Absolute. He is '*nirguna*', because he is beyond all cosmic qualities; not even '*śakti*' or creative power can be attributed to Him. Language, being essentially a product of the dualistic, phenomenal world, cannot reach Him; at best it can point to Him; that is all.

When Brahman experiences his *ānanda* not as one and indivisible but in the infinite multiplicity and variety of the manifested cosmos, He is called *Īśa* or *Īśvara*. The power by virtue of which the One contemplates Himself as Many, that is, experiences his *ānanda* in its infinite variety, is called '*Māyā*'. *Īśvara*, too, like the '*akṣara*', is without form, *amūrta* and *arūpa*, and as the Creator of the universe, He transcends it.

When Brahman experiences His *ānanda* in the infinite multiplicity of the manifested cosmos, not in its totality in

an eternal moment, as *Īśvara*, but as viewers (knowers) of one particular after another in temporal succession, these are the *Jīvas*, individual souls. Brahman as *Jīva* is therefore an experiencer of particulars (*viśeṣajñā*). Time in the all-embracing total consciousness of *Īśvara* doesn't exist; *Īśvara* is eternally omniscient (*nitya sarvajñā*).

The *Jīva* is then a mode of Brahman's consciousness, His '*cicchakti*', and the world around him, the manifestation of His *ānanda*. Unlike *Jīva*, who is eternal and immutable, the world (*jaga*) is always, at every moment, changing; but it is not unreal or illusory. To think that it has a separate, independent existence apart from Brahman—that is the real illusion, the result of ignorance or '*avidyā*'. The enlightened, liberated soul (*mukta jīva*) experiences the world around him, not as dead matter, as mere object of enjoyment (*bhogyā*) but as *cinmaya* and *ānandamaya*; in his vision, therefore, all this is Brahman: *Sarvaṁ khalvidaṁ brahma*.

The *Jīva* in his state of bondage (*baddhāvasthā*) forgets the nature of his real Self which is pure consciousness (*cit*) and so becomes identified with his body and in consequence regards the material world around him as dead, as mere food for his enjoyment (*bhoga*). This inveterate, all but ineradicable sense of the otherness and the deadness of the world are rooted in *dvaitabuddhi* or sense of dualism which is of the essence of *avidyā* (ignorance).

In the state of release (*muktāvasthā*), the liberated soul (*mukta jīva*) becomes one with Brahman; all sense of separateness disappears, but not his existence as an individual soul. He enjoys the infinite, ineffable bliss (*ānanda*) of Brahman, and, in a relative sense, the omniscience and



omnipotence of Īśvara. But even then he does not become Īśvara, who is eternally omniscient (*nitya sarvajña*) and thus beyond time.

This, then, is the fourfold (*catuspāt*) status of Brahman as revealed in Vedānta: (1) Brahman as 'akṣara', (2) Brahman as 'Īśvara', (3) Brahman as 'Jīva', and (4) Brahman as 'jagat'. This is very clearly expressed in the *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, thus:

*Udgītametat paramaṁ tu brahma ta-smimṁstrayaṁ supratīṣṭhākṣaraṁ ca.*  
'The Vedas declare this Brahman as the supreme. All the three states (*trayaṁ*)—*jagat*, Jīva, and Īśvara—are firmly established in Him; and He is the Akṣara (Imperishable) as well.'

### III

Of all the *Heilswegen*, roads to liberation (*mokṣamārga*), the Vedāntic way is the best because the Vedāntic vision of Reality is the most comprehensive of all, for Vedānta alone, of all ancient Indian philosophies, gives a complete account of Brahman. The threefold meditation (*upāsā-traividhya*) referred to in *Brahma-Sūtra* (I.1.32) is this Vedāntic way. What distinguishes this Vedāntic way to liberation from all others, including the great Sāṃkhya way, is that here, right from the beginning, the Vedāntic *upāsaka*, having before him the total view of Reality, aims not at this or that aspect of Brahman, but at Brahman in his fullness (*pūrṇa*). In the language of the Upaniṣads, this Pūrṇa Brahman, as we have seen, is *catuspāt*—fourfold. The threefold Vedāntic meditation—*upāsana*—takes full cognizance of this full, total, fourfold Brahman; and this threefold Vedāntic way is the way of *bhakti*—Bhakti-mārga. That this is so is what I shall

try to bring out in what follows.

The first thing we shall have to do, before we can proceed, is to determine the relation between the individual soul and God, between the Jīva and Brahman; everything, considering the subject of this discourse, turns upon this crucial issue. It will have been seen that in our brief representation of the Vedāntic version of Reality, of Brahman as *catuspāt*, Jīva is Brahman; he, too, like Brahman is eternal, and is pure Consciousness and Bliss (*cidānandamaya*), and in the fully liberated state—*muktāvasthā*—experiences himself as one with Brahman; and yet, Brahman is more (*adhika*) than Jīva, because Brahman as Īśvara sees the whole of the cosmos He has manifested within Himself in its totality in a timeless single vision, whereas as Jīva He is essentially a viewer (or knower) of particulars (*viśeṣa*). Total knowledge includes knowledge of particulars, just as the view of a whole tree includes the seeing of its various parts—the branches, leaves, and flowers. Even the liberated soul—*mukta jīva*—is not, like Īśvara, eternally omniscient—*nitya sarvajña*; his omniscience is relative; he can know whatever he wishes to, and instantly; but he has to turn his mind to it.

Besides, though endowed with inconceivable potentialities of knowledge and power, which become actual in the liberated state, the Jīva is not, like Brahman, all-pervading, omnipresent (*vibhu*). The Upaniṣads and the *Brahma-Sūtra* express this by describing the Jīva as '*aṇu*' which means 'fine', 'atomic'; as such it is contradistinguished from '*vibhu*', meaning all-pervading, omnipresent.

There are innumerable '*śruti*s—Vedic utterances—which clearly and unmistakably suggest that Brahman as all-powerful, all-controlling Īśvara and as the all-trans-



ending Absolute, Akṣara, is different from and more than the Jīva. Take, for instance, the famous image of the two birds inhabiting the same tree, of whom one eats (of) the delicious fruit, while the other not eating at all, just looks on.

*Dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā  
samānaṁ vrkṣaṁ pariśasvajāte;  
Tayoranyaḥ pippalaṁ svādvattya-  
naśnannanyo'bhicāśatī.*

There are, besides, repeated references in the Śrutis to Īśvara as the ruler and inner controller (*antaryāmin*). Two of them in particular have been quoted over and over again by all the great commentators of Vedānta including Śaṅkarācārya. They are: *Antaḥ praviṣṭaḥ śāstā janānām*—'The indwelling ruler of all souls'; *Ya ... ātmānamantaro yamayati*—'He who controls the soul from within'. Rāmānuja, in particular, frequently quotes these two śrutis to bring out the difference (*bheda*) between Brahman as *niyantā* (ruler) and Jīva as the *niyamyā* (ruled).

That Brahman is more than, greater than Jīva is very clearly stated by *Brahma-Sūtra*, II.1.22, which reads: '*Adhikarṇ tu bheda-nirdeśāt*'—(But Brahman) is something more (than the individual soul) on account of the indication of difference (Radhakrishnan's translation). This is also the interpretation of Śaṅkarācārya who writes: *Ātmā vā are drastavyah ... ityevamjātīyakaḥ kartṛkarmādibhedanirdeśo jīvādadhikarṇ brahma darśayati*—Śrutis like—the Ātman is to be seen (realized) by you—show by distinguishing the object from the subject, that Brahman is greater than Jīva.

The 'tu' in this *sūtra*, which means 'but', is significant; for it clearly points to the śrutis which affirm the '*abheda*'—non-difference—between Jīva and Brahman, śrutis like '*Tattvamasi*' (That art thou). This is why the *sūtra* draws our attention to the '*bheda*' (difference) which shows

that Brahman is greater than Jīva. The question that now becomes inevitable is: What sort of relation is this in which there is '*bheda*' as well as '*abheda*'? The answer is given in what is one of the most important of *Vedānta-Sūtras*, II.3.43: *Ātmo nānā vyapadeśād anyathā cāpi dāśakitavāditvam adhīyata eke*—(The soul is) a part (of the Lord) on account of the declaration of difference and otherwise also; for in some (recensions of the Vedas) (it) is spoken of as being (of the nature of) slaves, fishermen, etc. (Radhakrishnan's translation).

It should be noted that Ācārya Śaṅkara accepts this perfectly obvious meaning of the *sūtra*. 'The Jīva', he says, 'is a part (*amśa*) of Īśvara, as sparks are parts of the fire.... There are many śrutis which declare Brahman to be different from Jīva; on the other hand, there are many others which affirm non-difference.' (*Jīva Īśvara-syāmśo bhavitumarhati, yathāgnervisphuliṅgāḥ.... Anyathā cāpi vyapadeśo bhavatyānānāvasya pratipādakaḥ*.) He then concludes: 'As śrutis assert both difference (*bheda*) and non-difference (*abheda*) between Īśvara and Jīva it must be concluded that the Jīva is a part of Brahman.' (*Āto bhedaḥbhedaḥvagamābhyām amśatvāvagamah*.) The interpretation given by other commentators including Nimbārka and Rāmānuja is essentially the same.

Śaṅkara rightly points out that this sort of simultaneous existence of difference and non-difference, *bheda* and *abheda*, is possible only when the relation is one of part and whole, *amśa* and *amśin*. It should be noted, however, that the term '*amśa*' does not mean a fragment (*khaṇḍa*); it is *amśa* (part) as energy, for the Jīva, we have seen, is a mode of Brahman's *cicchakti*—consciousness-power; he is a part of Brahman in the sense in which my power of vision ('*darśana-śakti*') or my power of hearing



(*śravaṇa-śakti*) is a part of myself. Just as the existence of these various powers as parts of myself does not destroy my existence as an indivisible whole, so the existence of innumerable Jīvas does not detract in the least from the indivisibility, *akhaṇḍatva*, of Brahman, who alone, according to Vedānta, exists.

And wherever this relationship of *amśa* and *amśin* exists, there must be, as Ācārya Śaṅkara makes out so clearly, difference (*bheda*) as well as non-difference (*abheda*). From the point of view of *bhakti* this is of the utmost importance; for this is precisely the state of affairs in which *bhakti*, for the spiritual aspirant, becomes not only possible, but natural and inevitable. If there is complete *abheda*, there is no need of *bhakti*, indeed of any *sādhana* or effort of any kind, for the simple reason that there is no Jīva at all; for complete *abheda* means that, as Śaṅkara clearly saw, and so declared, with admirable logical consistency: The truth is that there is no such thing as Jīva, it is through the adjunct (*upādhi*) of *buddhi* that the state of Jīva (*Jīvatva*) is imagined (*Paramārthatastu na jīvo nāma buddhyupādhiparikalpitasvarūpavyatirekeṇāsti*). *Bhakti*, in such a case, becomes not only impossible, it becomes absolutely meaningless.

If, on the other hand, the difference (*bheda*) between the Jīva and Brahman is total, the possibility of *bhakti* is quite ruled out for the simple reason that there is no question, in that case, of union with the Divine since without an essential underlying principle which is the same and therefore common to both, union, in any sense of the term, becomes impossible; and if *that* becomes an impossibility, *bhakti* loses its very *raison d'être*, for it is the prospect of getting closer and closer to the Divine that arouses *bhakti* and keeps it alive. Extreme difference (*bheda*) between the Jīva and Brahman

is thus as fatal to *bhakti* as total identity.

*Bhakti* has meaning and supreme importance only when the relation between the *bhakta* (devotee) and the object of *bhakti*, between the Jīva and Brahman is that of *amśa* and *amśin*, of part and whole, in the sense we have defined above; and wherever this relation exists, there must be, as Ācārya Śaṅkara clearly saw, '*bhedā*' as well as '*abheda*'. The *amśa* is wholly included in the *amśin*; apart from the *amśin*, it has no existence; it is therefore one (*abhinna*) with the *amśin*. But the *amśin* (whole) is obviously more than its *amśas* (parts) not because it is a sum total of them but because it includes and transcends them. It is, as has already been explained, like the relation between I myself and my power of vision (*darśana-śakti*), for instance, I am more than my power of vision, since even when the latter does not function, as during sleep, I continue to exist. The same is true of my other sensory faculties which belong to me and hence can be legitimately looked upon as parts of my being.

Ācārya Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Vedānta-Sūtra* II.1.22, quoted above—*Adhikariṁ tu bhedanirdeśāt*—puts the question: How can the two contradictory relations, *bheda* and *abheda*, coexist (*Katham bhedā-bhedau viruddhau sambhaveyālām*)? To this he replies: No, the objection does not hold; that the two relations (*bheda* and *abheda*) can coexist the (analogy) of infinite space (*ākāśa*) and the space enclosed within an earthen vessel (*ghaṭākāśa*): *Naīsa doṣaḥ, ākāśatra tatra pratiṣṭhāpitatvāt*. I quote these words to show how the Ācārya here not only accepts *bheda* but clearly admits the possibility of the coexistence of *bheda* with *abheda*.

(To be continued)



## WHAT IS A TRUE RELIGION?

ALEXANDER M. DUBIANSKY

*Dr Alexander M. Dubiansky is Head of the Department of Indian Philology, Moscow State University, Moscow, USSR. He gave this special address in the convention on 'Harmony of Religions' organized by the Institute last March as part of the celebrations of the 155th birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna.*

REVERED MAHARAJ, dear friends,

I deem it a special privilege to speak in this wonderful religious and cultural institution. I am especially grateful to Swami Lokeshwaranandaji, who suggested the topic for my speech. He obviously felt that I was interested in the problem. So I am going to speak on the issue of what a true religion is.

The problem may be simple enough for a person firmly rooted in some specific creed. 'Oh,' he will exclaim, 'mine is the true religion!' 'No,' a representative of some other creed will say, 'the true religion is my religion.' The third one will say the same about his faith, and so on. We see that difficulties begin to mount. The question arises: If we have so many truths, is it possible to conciliate them or, on the other hand, is there a true religion at all? The problem becomes complicated, the more so since there are many notions about religion generally. These notions differ vastly and neither devotees nor scholars will give an answer agreeable to all. Of course, I don't claim to give such an answer either. I would like to express some ideas as I understand

them, in a straight and sincere discourse.

The subject of our convention is Harmony in Religion. It can be understood in two ways—the harmony within one personal soul and the harmony between different religious creeds, schools, paths, etc. At first sight, these are two different questions but in reality they are closely interlinked. Surely we can imagine a person who has achieved a religious harmony and salvation, breaking all ties with society and mankind. But this egoistic manner of religious life (or rather religious death) does not interest us and actually it never became the main path of religious aspirations. So it is possible to imagine an absolutely desocialized person, but impossible to imagine a society consisting only of such atom-like creatures separated from each other, closed, concentrated on themselves. That is why from the early days of mankind the stress was laid upon some sort of communication between human beings—be it preaching, religious communities, fatherly or friendly advice, or just sharing one another's feelings. The latter is to my mind especially important, for compassion is one of the basic human



characteristics.

Let us recollect in this connection what was said about Buddha—*paradukham dukha*—suffering for the others' sufferings. Let us remember Jesus Christ who is known as the Saviour of mankind, who took upon himself the sins, miseries, sorrows, and burdens of all. We find the same conception in a more sophisticated form in Russian culture. I give but one example. In F. Dostoyevsky's novel, *The Brothers Karamazoff*, one of the leading figures, Ivan Karamazoff, challenges God by saying, 'If for the happy future of mankind one drop of blood of an innocent child must be shed I refuse to participate in it and I return to God my ticket to the future.' And of course we remember the great Sri Ramakrishna, who was so sensitive that when somebody walked over the grass he felt as though the man were treading on his chest.

One can object: Such persons as Buddha, Christ, and Ramakrishna are very rare. They are exceptions—and such a level of compassion cannot be achieved by an ordinary person. Yes, that is true. It is obviously impossible for everybody to become Christ, or Buddha, or Ramakrishna, but what is possible for everyone is to take them into the soul and try to follow the path they had opened for mankind. And it is not the path of war, but the path of peace.

Speaking of compassion I want to stress—and I think it will be in accordance with Sri Ramakrishna's views—that a simple compassion is not enough. 'You are miserable, I pity you'—such a position may even be humiliating. 'You are miserable, I shall serve you'—will be more appropriate. This attitude of service not only to God but to other human beings should be considered as one of the main principles of a true religion. Why? The

answer is simple. Both these services are substantially alike, for one should see God in all human beings. This sacred attitude is actually the only real link between people. Other links are, so to say, occasional. Indeed, racial, national, partisan (and religious for that matter) ties can unite people strongly, no doubt, but they can unite only groups of people however big they might be—not all of them.

And here the problem of religious harmony in the second sense of the word comes in. We all know that from time immemorial there have been many religious sects, trends, paths, communities, etc. And it is no secret that almost each of them claimed to be the only true one. What is God? What is man? How to attain God? Who has the right to attain God? Such questions have always been discussed. Controversies have always arisen, true paths have been pointed out. But alas, these paths, more often than not, proved to be paths of war. The examples are many. I give only one. An outstanding South Indian Vaishnava poet Tirumaṅgaiyālvār once said: 'The Jainas are fools, the Buddhists are the dull ones, but really miserable are those who adore Shiva.' Needless to say, such an atmosphere of intolerance and confrontation was sustained not only in words but also in deeds. To give an example: another Tamil poet of the Middle Ages, Shaivite Tirujñāna-sambandhar, sent to the gallows 8,000 Jainas. The number perhaps is exaggerated by legend but the fact of severe religious persecution remains true.

Though many religions proclaimed tolerance and tried to practise it, they did not have much success. To this day, religious incompatibility, religious confrontations, and wars are great obstacles to mankind on its way to peace.

To solve the problem is not as simple



as it seems. It is necessary to make people realize that all the religions are just different ways of expressing eternal Truth; that is, they contain the highest Truth but they are, so to say, historically and geographically limited. But this is not all. It is comparatively easy to accept the idea of Oneness on the intellectual level. As a matter of fact, this idea is not new. Speaking of Indian culture, suffice it to mention several names of saints who understood and preached it—Guru Nānak, Kabīr, Ramalinga Swami. But the most successful effort to bring this idea to people was that of Sri Ramakrishna. Why so?

I think it is because Ramakrishna, by his talent, could not only understand the idea but he could saturate it with

his emotions. He was able not only to recognize the right of existence for different creeds, but he himself practised them, loved them. That is why he did not insist on religious formalities and preached love, which needs only one shrine—the human heart.

In this small report I did not intend to exhaust or to elaborate the subject. I wanted to point out some characteristics of a true religion which seem essential to me. These are: (1) compassion and service to people, (2) broadmindedness and universalism, (3) emotionalism (love for God and people), and (4) comparative insignificance of formalities and stress on human feelings.

He [Buddha] was the only man who was bereft of all motive power. There were other great men who all said they were the Incarnations of God Himself, and that those who would believe in them would go to heaven. But what did Buddha say with his dying breath? "None can help you; help yourself; work out your own salvation." He said about himself, "Buddha is the name of infinite knowledge, infinite as the sky; I, Gautama, have reached that state; you will all reach that too if you struggle for it." Bereft of all motive power, he did not want to go to heaven, did not want money; he gave up his throne and everything else and went about begging his bread through the streets of India, preaching for the good of men and animals with a heart as wide as the ocean....

To many the path becomes easier if they believe in God. But the life of Buddha shows that even a man who does not believe in God, has no metaphysics, belongs to no sect, and does not go to any church, or temple, and is a confessed materialist, even he can attain to the highest. We have no right to judge him. I wish I had one infinitesimal part of Buddha's heart. Buddha may or may not have believed in God; that does not matter to me. He reached the same state of perfection to which others come by *bhakti*—love of God—*yoga*, or *jñāna*. Perfection does not come from belief or faith. Talk does not count for anything.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



## WORLD VISION OF ROMAIN ROLLAND

SWARAJ MAZUMDAR, M.A.

*Mr Swaraj Mazumdar is a senior journalist working with the Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta. He participated in the third session devoted to the theme 'Romain Rolland on World Unity': the session was part of a two-day seminar on 'Romain Rolland' organized by the Institute in collaboration with the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, in February 1990.*

*Mr Mazumdar presented the following paper:*

### I

THERE ARE always two worlds: one, that in which we live; and the other, that in which we want to live. The first is an objective reality while the second is an ideal—realizable, but not yet accomplished. Romain Rolland's seventy-nine years of earthly existence (1866-1944) was ceaselessly consumed by a burning will and an epic struggle to integrate the two—the apparent reality and Truth Absolute! For he was an ardent believer of unity, unity of all sorts—unity of past and present, unity of faith and reason, unity

of thought and action, unity of the two 'halves of the soul', i.e. West and East, in short, world unity. This overpowering zeal for unity stemmed from his conviction in the Advaitic principle that Swami Vivekananda enunciated thus: 'Unity is the test of truth. Everything that makes for Oneness is truth. Love is truth, and hatred is false, because hatred makes for multiplicity. It is a disintegrating power.'<sup>1</sup>

So unity and truth to Romain Rolland are synonymous. But the flower of this synthetic realization did not bloom all at once. Like Nachiketa of the Katha

<sup>1</sup> Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1970, p.278. Tolstoy in a letter to young Rolland once said: 'All that tends to unify mankind belongs to the good and the beautiful. All that tends to disunite it, is Evil and Ugly. That which unites people is good and beautiful for Humanity.' Rolland, however, repudiated this pragmatic yardstick of measuring Art much later. (See Stefan Zweig, *Romain Rolland : The Man and His Work*, p. 20.) Compare Tolstoy's statement with Spinoza's: 'Unite with others and try to unite them one to the other—for everything that tends to unite them is good.' (*Ethics*, IV, p. 40.)



*Upanishad*, he too was born with the potential seed question—'Where did I come from?'<sup>2</sup> That was the first whisper of his inner being. This deep query had haunted him like an apparition from his childhood.

Born in the stuffy atmosphere of Burgundy in war-ravaged France a lonely child, ceaselessly stalked by death, tossed by the storm of the growing fanaticism of the masses, benumbed by bloodshed, revolutions, and the depressing moral bankruptcy of the then radarless French and European society, Rolland's journey was not a straight one. It was, on the contrary, a complex, painstaking, tortuous journey, a '*chemin qui marche*',<sup>3</sup> a journey of his conscience for the sake of an ultimate truth.<sup>4</sup> The journey was no doubt spiritual in character as it was a journey within and the voyage was prompted by a spiritual question, not a material one. Therefore, unlike a scientist, who, more often than not, proceeds from a material standpoint, we find Rolland seeking to unravel the Truth from a moral, ethical, and religious plane.

Let me point out that I am not concerned with the minute details of Rolland's life. Time won't permit that. Nor am I following the journey of his conscience chronologically, as it took place in a zigzag manner. I only intend to draw

attention to the general background or the key factors which stimulated his search for truth, the highest human value, and the most essential thread that runs through all the phases of his life and works.

As an introspective child and youth, Rolland's first fascination or 'religion' was music; and then literature and philosophy. So, within the four walls of his home which appeared to him to be a 'trap',<sup>5</sup> he discovered his heroes—Beethoven and Shakespeare who expressed in sound and in words, the same vital joy in life that possessed young Rolland.<sup>6</sup> In course of time, Rolland, however, discovered other heroes—Wagner and especially Tolstoy whose idea of universal brotherhood and love of mankind as well as his principle of harnessing 'Pure Art' to the service of society left a strong impression on his life, early creative career and on his mission to remould the spirit of his generation through 'The People's Theatre'. But Rolland never wanted to remain in a bog; the fathomless expanse of the ocean of consciousness always beckoned him. So neither Shakespeare nor Wagner, nor Tolstoy could satisfy him for long. Though Rolland was conscious of the universal elements of their art, he freed himself from their magic charm as his whole being longed for something else—the Truth Absolute. How could he, who

2 Romain Rolland, *Journey Within*, trans. Elsie Pell, Philosophical Library, N. Y., 1947, p. 1.

3 Alex Aronson, *Romain Rolland*, Padma Publications, 1944, p. 2.

4 'If it turns fearlessly towards the search for truth at all costs with single-minded sincerity prepared for any sacrifice, I should call it religious; for it presupposes faith in an end to human effort higher than the life of the individual, at times higher than the life of existing society, and even higher than the life of humanity as a whole,' said Rolland in his *The Life of Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1970, p. 6.

5 *Journey Within*, p. 1.

6 'I don't want to die!' Rolland said to his mother when he was very sick. (*Journey Within*, p. 3.)



yearned for the whole, remain happy with the part? Rolland thus continued his march from lower truth to the higher till he found the highest.

The story of the evolution of Rolland's conscience, that expanded in ever-wider circles until it embraced the whole of humanity, will not be complete without a brief reference to his three revelations. 'I have noted three of those spiritual outbursts, three of those Revelations that filled my veins with the fire that nourishes the heart of the universe,' Rolland writes in his spiritual autobiography.<sup>7</sup> The first revelation came to him in the year 1882, when he was standing on the Alpine terrace of Ferney, and 'beheld Nature in all her nakedness'. The second revelation came two years later when he was getting ready for his examination at Ecole Normale. Rolland was studying the *Ethics of Spinoza*, of which he was to write in *Journey Within*: ' "*Things changeless and eternal*" are "*real*." They are the most real...the Essence of beings, the Substance—"the Being, singular and infinite, the being that is all being, and besides which there is nothing." "<sup>8</sup> Spinoza said, '*Everything that is, exists in God*.'<sup>9</sup> Rolland's prison gates were thus opened. 'I, too, am in God!' murmured Rolland in wonder. Detailing his experience later he writes, 'In my icy room, when the winter night is falling, escape from the bottomless pit of Substance into the dazzling light of Being...I shall not fall, for I am nothing. My fall would be His.' Thus, in the text

of *Ethics* Rolland had not discovered Spinoza but his unknown self. 'I read, not what he had said, but what I wanted to say—the words that my own childish thoughts were trying to stutter with my inarticulate tongue.'<sup>10</sup>

The third revelation came, writes Rolland, 'shortly before I entered the Ecole Normale. I was taking a short train trip in the North.... The train stopped suddenly in the middle of a tunnel. The lights in the compartments went out. Minutes passed, but the train did not start. The locomotive sent out distress signals and my travelling companions became restless. They were then thinking of a recent train accident and I was meditating—Suddenly it was as though the tunnel opened.... I said to myself: "All that is mine. It is me. What difference can this car plunged in darkness make to me? In a few seconds I may be ground to powder. I?—No! Why, they cannot hold me. I am lighter than air. Like Proteus of the thousand forms, I slip between the fingers; I escape through the boards and the twisted bars, from the broken flesh and the vaults of stone. I am here, there, everywhere, and I am everything...."'<sup>11</sup>

## II

Romain Rolland's 'world', as we have seen so far, thus expanded continuously. As his consciousness began to burst all bounds, so his 'world' began to grow in size like a ripple in a pond. The world

<sup>7</sup> *Journey Within*, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> *Ethics*, I, 15, quoted in *Journey Within*, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> *Journey Within*, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30. (About a year later, when Rolland read for the first time Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, he was struck by the similarity between his own semi-mystic feeling in the train and the experiences of a prisoner soldier!)



of Burgundy merged with Paris. Paris became France. France dissolved in Europe. Europe embraced the whole of mankind. Finally, the cosmic unity—that nucleus of the cosmos which is in each being. Thus everybody's concern became his concern, everybody's well-being became his well-being.

But this discovery of cosmic unity, the Absolute Truth, needed years of back-breaking struggle for individual freedom, suffering, and tremendous sacrifice. When the First World War broke out, Rolland came to Switzerland only to remain 'Above the Battle'<sup>12</sup> like his hero Christophe. He criticized both France and Germany vehemently for the war and as a result, he himself was mistrusted by both. After the fall of Europe, he found some hope in the Russian Revolution and did not hesitate to praise it. For this open support, the democratic West never forgave him. But Rolland did not care. He, however, did not approve of the communist violence. In 1917 he refused to accompany Lenin to Russia. This non-partisan approach flowing from his faith in human unity earned him even the calumny of being a German collaborator. Rolland's only crime was that he corresponded with some of the free thinkers of the new Germany—among whom was Einstein.<sup>13</sup> That could not silence Rolland. He believed that the 'intellectual elites' of the world could still save European civilization. In 1919 he issued the Declaration of the Independence of the Mind. But the concerted voice of a few intellectuals,

Tagore being one of them, proved inadequate for subduing the imperious hydra of fascism, fanaticism, and jingoism.

Thus Rolland came to a decisive point in the 1920s. He realized that Europe, the so-called West, alone could not save 'civilization'. He turned to the East. The great voices of Beethoven, Michelangelo, and Shakespeare were lost in the wilderness. Now 'it needed a Ramakrishna and a Vivekananda to bring Rolland back to the earth',<sup>14</sup> a world of social action. Says Rolland, 'When I set out on an intellectual pilgrimage to India, I brought back with me not the static dream of the infinite in which Indian thought is exhausted, but men who knew how to derive energy from Dream, men who could plunge into the seething arenas of action: Gandhi, the shepherd of the peoples, and the hero, Vivekananda.'<sup>15</sup>

According to Rolland, the spiritual experiences which marked him for life brought him singularly near to the spirit of India.<sup>16</sup> And this spirit incarnate was none but Ramakrishna who realized with incomparable charm and power the splendid symphony of the Universal Soul, who 'more fully than any other man not only conceived, but realised in himself the total Unity of this river of God'.<sup>17</sup> And if Ramakrishna was the spirit, Vivekananda was its form and expression. I personally think Rolland turned to Vivekananda and his seraphic Master to seek the seal of approval of what he had all along been doing. He wanted to be sure that he was on the right track. By projecting

12 The title of Rolland's famous book denouncing war, 1915.

13 Romain Rolland, *I Will Not Rest*, Selwyn & Blant Ltd., London, p. 265 (footnote 2).

14 Aronson, *Romain Rolland*, p. 175.

15 Romain Rolland, *I Will Not Rest*, p. 55.

16 *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, p. 176.

17 *The Life of Ramakrishna*, pp. 2-3.



the noblest thoughts and wonderful lives of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Gandhi, Rolland not only sought to resuscitate the moribund civilization of the West and destroy the myth that East and West are incompatible 'halves of the soul' but he wanted also to prove at the same time that unity of thought, faith, reason, and action was indeed possible.

It is not my intention, which would be quite unfair, to draw a comparison between Rolland and Vivekananda, for they had their natural differences; but one would be surprised to find how similar were many of their views! Rolland was particularly fascinated by Vivekananda's gospel of universal religion, the eternal grand idea of the spiritual oneness of the whole universe, his stress on mutual and respectful co-operation between the East and the West, his love for freedom, his bravery and strength, his synthesis of reason and faith, his constant spirited struggle to defend Truth and his eternal readiness to suffer for the good of others. Vivekananda's message—'Serve God in man'—and the balance he achieved between a burning love for the Absolute and the irresistible appeal of suffering humanity also inspired Rolland. Writes Rolland in appreciation of Vivekananda: 'I hope to be able to make other Westerners, who resemble me, feel the attraction that I feel for this elder brother, the son of the Ganga, who of all modern men achieved the highest equilibrium between the diverse forces of thought, and was one of the first to sign a treaty of peace between the two forces eternally warring within us, the forces of reason and faith.'<sup>18</sup>

Gandhi's humility and his use of non-violence as a tool of political action and his message to the Brotherhood of International Fellowship (in which he asked the Christians to be a better Christian, Hindus to be a better Hindu, and so on) no doubt impressed Rolland. But this message was only an echo of Vivekananda's address at the final session on 27 September 1893 in the Parliament of Religions where he said: 'The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.... It [the Parliament of Religions] has proved ... that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character.... upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: "Help and not Fight," "Assimilation and not Destruction," "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension."' Rolland, of course, has taken note of Vivekananda's influence on Gandhi and commented that 'Aurobindo Ghose, Tagore, and Gandhi have grown, flowered, and borne fruit under the double constellation of the Swan and the Eagle.'<sup>19</sup>

Rolland's own aspirations thus wonderfully fitted with Vivekananda's call for universal co-operation, assimilation, and free growth. 'There is no single one of us who cannot take this lesson to heart,' Rolland commented and admitted that 'he has vaguely aspired to this wide comprehension all through his life'.<sup>20</sup> This is not a place to assess the degree of his success

18 *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* p. 176.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 288.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 310.



or failure. What is really important is that he made a sincere and heroic attempt to work for the ideal that was dearest to him—bringing about unity of mankind and singing the eternal glory of spiritual truth. In the late 20s he boldly drew our attention to the fact that the 'time is past for the pre-eminence of one incomplete and partial civilisation. Asia and Europe, the two giants, are standing face to face as equals for the first time. If they are wise they will work together, and the fruit of their labours will be for all'.<sup>21</sup>

Rolland himself set an example. In co-operation with his publisher 'Roniger', he planned to set up in Switzerland a 'Weltbibliothek', a meeting place of European and Asian writers. He also prepared the blueprint of a 'Friendship House' to pool the living intellectual forces of Europe and of Asia, who tend to know each other and co-operate. He had many other noble plans including the publication of books of a universal nature. Though the first two projects did not materialize, he was successful in publishing 'Mahatma

Gandhi' in the journal *Europe*. He also tried to have Tagore's *Gora* published in French by Stock. Later he wrote the lives of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and urged 'the world, ignorant as yet' to profit by the 'marvellous movement'<sup>22</sup> they have launched. 'Among the spiritual ruins strewn all over Europe,' Rolland tells his Western brothers, 'our "Mother India" will teach you to excavate the unshakable foundations of your Capitole. She possesses the calculations and the plans of the "Master Craftsman." Let us rebuild our house with our own materials.'<sup>23</sup>

Who is this 'Master Craftsman'? The indivisible spirit of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. How will it help? It will help the people of both East and West 'to find their true selves, naked and without the mask of falsehood'. Thus, once again, Rolland was addressing the *Universal Soul* of man. For 'there is neither East nor West for the naked soul; such things are merely its trappings. The whole world is its home. And as its home is each one of us, it belongs to all of us.'<sup>24</sup>

21 Ibid., p. 288.

22 Ibid., p. 289.

23 Ibid., p. 295.

24 *The Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 9.

I belong to a land of rivers. I love them as if they were living creatures.... Now of all rivers the most sacred is that which gushes out eternally from the depths of the soul, from its rocks and sands and glaciers. Therein lies primeval Force and that is what I call religion. Everything belongs to this river of the Soul....

In my turn I present him [Ramakrishna] to you [my western readers], not as a new book but as a very old one....

It is always the same Book. It is always the same Man—the Son of Man, the Eternal, Our Son, Our God reborn. With each return he reveals himself a little more fully, and more enriched by the universe.

ROMAIN ROLLAND



## TALKS AND DISCOURSES

**'Love is Higher than Work, than Yoga, than Knowledge'**

The great Buddha advised the avoiding of the interminable, senseless metaphysical speculations, sophistry which was vanity of vanities. Sri Ramakrishna would bow down and pay respects in deep humility to all and sundry. To him everything was manifestation of God, the supreme Being—the only Reality. But this manifestation is muted in some, while in others it was pronounced. 'Yadyadvibhūtimātsattvaṃ śrīmadūrjitameva vā...' (Gītā X.41) (Whatever being, object there is in the world, which is glorious, possessed of magnificence, that know you to be a product of, a part of My splendour.)

But the Master warns that devotees should be matter of fact, pragmatic and should have enough sense not to be too close to a lion or a tiger or pal with an evil person though God is manifest in them as well.

The world of senses predominates so long as there is no realization of the identity of self (small ego with I-ness) and Brahman, the Ultimate. To say 'I am That', 'So'ham', and to contemplate formless Nirguṇa Brahman is extremely difficult for one who is circumscribed by a body with a jumble of sense-organs projecting a perverted view of reality.

In Kali Yuga elaborate rituals and grandiose sacrifices have lost their relevance. Man now struggles for a piece of bread. It is cliff-hanging for the mortals for physical survival. Sri Ramakrishna reassuringly observes that the easier path

open to man is the path of devotion—*Nārāḍīya Bhakti* (the intense love that the sage Nārada had for Lord Viṣṇu)—no rigidity about rituals, no strait-jacket of austerities—no dictum of spiritual discipline but love for the Beloved—complete surrender to the will of the mother by the baby cat. The relationship between the devotee and his god is one of the utmost intimacy. No formality intervenes. Swami Brahmananda would exhort the disciples to strike this close relationship which should 'be very personal and exclusive—only person to person. As Swami Vivekananda defines this form of love: 'Forms vanish, rituals fly away, books are superseded; images, temples, churches, religions and sects, countries and nationalities—all these limitations and bondages fall off by their own nature from him who knows this love of God.'

While reading from the *Bhakti-Sūtras* by Nārada on 24 June 1895, Swamiji observes: 'Let nothing stand between God and your love for Him. Love Him, love Him, love Him—and let the world say what it will.'

In fact, all world religions, save Buddhism, have in them streaks of personalized devotion, sometimes mute, sometimes markedly defined. In Islam Allah is 'Malek' the Lord overseeing the good of his bondmen or serfs, the human race. In Christian scriptures God is saviour, the vigilant shepherd tending his flock of sheep lest they stray from the right path. Judaism has its Jehovah, who is very jealous about his sovereignty over his men. He is absolute and shall not brook anyone sneaking in to challenge his authority.\*

\*Based on discourses by Swami Lokeshwarananda on Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta in April 1991.



**He is not Matter but Whatever Is Real in Matter is He.**

It is emphasized over and over again that the phenomenal world is nothing but *Sat*, the One existence. Individuation into disparate objects of diverse names and forms arises for convenience of identification. In the beginning, the physical universe existed as *Sat*, no individual objects as we know of now. *Sat* or Brahman is the only cause of all created phenomena. Superposed names and forms bring in the sense of separateness of the empirical world from its creator, the *Īśvara*.

The illustrations of earth and gold underline this cardinal point. The effect is a modification of the cause. The earthen pots of different dimensions and forms are effects, the earth being the cause that goes into the creation of the vessels. The earth is real and not its modifications, the pots. Gold is real and not the ornaments that are made of gold. It is *Māyā* or *avidyā* that creates the illusive idea that the percepts of our sense-organs are real.

There is no contradiction or dichotomy between religion and reason. Religion invites investigation and experiment as do the physical sciences. The process of rational approach is very much crucial to religion. If it fails to meet the demands of scientific investigation and litmus test of experiment, 'its destruction would be the best thing that could happen,' as Swamiji declared.

In the supreme proposition *Tat tvam asi* is underlined the identity of *Jīva* (the small self) and Brahman (the cosmic self). This identification is apparently vulnerable in the sense that a *Jīva* can never be Brahman. *Jīva* is finite, mortal, and is subject to changes and constant modifica-

tions. Brahman is the Highest, the Greatest, the Ultimate, without birth and decay. On the surface, to try to forge an identity between the two can have no convincing basis. How then to get round this problem? The *mahāvākya* implies that *Jīva* and Brahman are the same in essence, in spirit. When divested of the attributes or the superimpositions there emerges the pure Consciousness, the substratum of all existence, of which stuff the *Jīva* is made. In this perspective, the difference between a glow-worm and the sun, the king and his servant, an atom and the great mountain Meru boils down to the basic truth of degrees of manifestation of the pure Being, the One that is transcendent and immanent, the One without a second. 'You and I are little bits, little points, little channels, little expressions, all living inside of that infinite ocean of Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss'—argues Swami Vivekananda.

In the aphorism, 'That thou art,' the implied connotation has to be probed and accepted and not its literary meaning. The disciple has to go to the core, the hidden import of the sacred words of his Guru.

Reason is not supreme, nor is it sovereign. Through reasoning reinforced by the accumulated wisdom contained in the scriptures, man attains to the Highest Truth of his divine essence. The Absolute Truth is beyond time, space, and causation. It is impersonal. It is universal. It stands no segmentation. Truth is One Reality and multiplicity is illusion caused by *avidyā*. To the mortals the phenomenal world is very satisfying. We the mortals have desires and the fulfilment of desires gives us great pleasure. The sense of pain and pleasure emanates from our being immersed in the world of *Māyā*.\*

\* Based on discourses by Swami Lokeswarananda on *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* in March 1991.



## I am in all and all in me

Realization is seeing at a transcendent level. Sense-organs have many limitations. Only relative truths emerge from sense-perceptions. The feeling that I am in everything and that every being is in me can give bliss infinite.

Bhūman is Brahman. One cannot love others and give of his best unless there is a sense of unity with every being, animate or inanimate. One can feel the response of trees if there is love for them. Trees seem to greet and stretch out their limbs in caress. They sparkle in joy when a loving person enters the forest. But the trees shiver in pain and wear dark faces of resentment as soon as a cruel person enters the forest. There is no rapport, no bonhomie, no 'hello' from the trees.

Sri Ramakrishna had that feeling of oneness. Two boatmen were fighting with each other. One, a stronger person, beat the other. Sri Ramakrishna felt pain as if he himself was being beaten. There were marks of injury on his back. Such phenomenon is not uncommon when there is a great intensity of love and fellow-feeling for one who is suffering.

We have heard of stigmata. It is the 'reproduction of the wounds of the passion of Christ in the human body. The first saint to have received the stigmata is St. Francis of Assisi.'

Lord Ganesha, the Divine Mother's darling once beat a cat. The cat's body was bruised and these bruises appeared on the person of the Mother Durga. Ganesha had the revelation of his life when he was told that the Divine Mother was as much in the cat as She was in Her son. Radhu, the Holy Mother Sarada

Devi's niece, had a pet cat. A monk declared a war against it. When the Holy Mother was leaving for Calcutta, she called in the monk and advised him not to beat the cats because, she said, 'For ever in them am I'. The cat family thrived on the Mother's loving care.

The Infinite is self-sufficient. It needs nothing alternative, no separate locus to sustain it. It is the whole cosmos. Like ether or the sky it is all-pervasive. It is independent and there is nothing beyond itself. What is finite is mortal, transient, and limited, only the Infinite is deathless. One gains immortality when one identifies oneself with the cosmos, the Infinite, the non-dual Self.

Bhūman is not an object of cognition of the mind. It is beyond mind and hence beyond speech. Mind as an organ of perception has its domain only over the objects of our experience. Bhūman is Brahman itself and as such has no limiting adjuncts. It exists in its own greatness. The Infinite permeates the whole existence. There is one single life-stream in different forms in the empirical world—which are parts of the Infinite *Chaitanya*. Everything is *Chaitanya* or *Chit*. This is the message of Advaita philosophy. There is only one *Sat*, the pure Consciousness but the scholars explain it in various ways. Swami Ashokananda in his ... *An Overview of Vedanta* observes, 'Monism implies naturally two concepts: One is the unreality of the material world, including our body and mind. Very drastic. And the other is that I, the individual, am truly the universal God.... "That thou art"; ... "I am Brahman". Such sentences are called *mahāvākyas* supreme statements, because they contain the highest truth, the grand conclusions of monism.'

\* Based on discourses (Tarapada Chaudhuri Lectures) by Swami Lokeswarananda on the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* in March 1991.



## Love and Serve Man as God

While giving instruction to a devout aspirant, the Master [Sri Ramakrishna] said to him, 'When one actually sees his chosen ideal in man, one realizes the divine Lord. Vaishnavacharan used to say, "When one has faith in the *līlā* (play or sport) of God as man one acquires perfect knowledge." ' Again, observing that the mind of a particular devotee could not become calm on account of a great attachment to someone in the family, the Master advised him to serve and love that object of his affection as a form of the divine Lord. It may also be recalled how he advised a woman devotee, who was very much attached to a young nephew of hers, to serve and love that child as the Boy Krishna, and how, as the result of that practice, she attained *bhāvasamādhi* (ecstasy in which the devotee retains his ego and enjoys communion with the Personal God) in a short time. In fact, he instructed many a devotee to love and serve man—one's relation, for instance—as a form of God.

'Not compassion to Jīvas (living beings; men) but service to them as Śiva (God),' said Sri Ramakrishna in ecstasy. That was sometime in 1884, when seated in his room at Dakshineswar and surrounded by devotees, including Narendrar [Swami Vivekananda], he was explaining the tenet of the Vaishnava religion to have compassion for all beings. No sooner had he uttered the words, 'compassion for all beings', than he suddenly went into ecstasy. Regaining partial normal consciousness in a short time, he continued, 'Talk of compassion for beings! Insignif-

icant creatures that you are, how can you show compassion to beings? Who are you to show compassion? You wretch, who are you to bestow it? No, no; it is not compassion to Jīvas but service to them as Śiva.'

Of all those who listened to those words of the Master spoken in that ecstatic mood Narendrar alone could detect and understand their hidden import at that time. For, on coming out of the room at the end of the Master's ecstasy, he said, 'What a new and attractive Gospel have we received today through those words of his, wherein a synthesis has been effected of sweet devotion to the Lord with Vedāntic knowledge, which is generally regarded as dry, austere, and lacking in sympathy with the sufferings of others. From what the Master in ecstasy said today, it is gathered that the Vedānta of the forest can be brought to human habitation, and that it can be applied in practice to the work-a-day world. Let man do everything he is doing; there is no harm in that; it is sufficient for him, first, to be fully convinced that it is God who is manifested before him as the universe and all the beings in it. Those with whom he comes in contact every moment of his life are all His parts, are all He Himself. If he can look upon all the persons of the world as Śiva, how can he regard himself as superior to them, or cherish anger and hatred for them or an arrogant attitude towards them, or even to be kind to them? Thus serving the Jīvas as Śiva, he will have his heart purified and be convinced in a short time that he himself is also a part of God, the Bliss Absolute, the eternally pure, wakeful, and free Being.'

\*Based on discourses by Swami Rasajnananda on *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* in March 1991.



## Freedom from Maya

All the various manifestations of religion, in whatever shape and form they have come to mankind, have one common central message: the preaching of freedom, the way out of this world. They never came to reconcile the world and religion, but to cut the Gordian knot, to establish religion in its own ideal, and not to compromise with the world.

One curious fact present in the midst of all our joys and sorrows, difficulties and struggles, is that we are surely journeying towards freedom. The question was this: 'What is this universe? From what does it arise? Into what does it go?' And the answer was: 'In freedom it rises, in freedom it rests, and into freedom it melts away.' This idea of freedom you cannot relinquish.

Now, if the manifestation of this power of freedom is really governing the whole universe—applying that to religion, our special study—we find this idea has been the one assertion throughout. As the idea of nature expands, the idea of the soul which is superior to nature also expands, until we come to what we call monotheism, which holds that there is maya (nature), and that there is some Being who is the Ruler of this maya.

Here Vedanta begins, i.e. where these monotheistic ideas first appear. But the Vedanta philosophy wants further explanation. This explanation—that there is a Being beyond all these manifestations of maya, who is superior to and independent of maya, who is attracting us towards Himself, and that we are all going towards Him—is very good, says the Vedanta, but yet the perception is not clear, the vision is dim

and hazy, although it does not directly contradict reason. The idea that the goal is far off, far beyond nature, attracting us all towards it, has to be brought nearer and nearer, without degrading or degenerating it. The God of heaven becomes the God in nature, and the God in nature becomes the God who is nature, and the God who is nature becomes the God within this temple of the body, and the God dwelling in the temple of the body at last becomes the temple itself, becomes the soul and man—and there it reaches the last words it can teach. He whom the sages have been seeking in all these places is in our own hearts; the voice that you heard was right, says the Vedanta, but the direction you gave to the voice was wrong. That ideal of freedom that you perceived was correct, but you projected it outside yourself, and that was your mistake. Bring it nearer and nearer, until you find that it was all the time within you, it was the Self of your own self. That freedom was your own nature, and this maya never bound you. Nature never has power over you. Not only should we see it intellectually, but we should also perceive it, realize it, much more definitely than we perceive this world. Then we shall know that we are free. Then, and then alone, will all difficulties vanish, then will all the perplexities of heart be smoothed away, all crookedness made straight, then will vanish the delusion of manifoldness and nature; and maya, instead of being a horrible, hopeless dream, as it is now, will become beautiful, and this earth, instead of being a prison-house, will become our playground; and even dangers and difficulties, even all sufferings, will become deified.\*

\*Based on discourses by Swami Rasajnananda on Swami Vivekananda's *Jñāna-Yoga* in March 1991.



### The First Step to *Bhakti* (cont.)

The fruit of *śravaṇa* is *bhakti* but it has to be noted that the *Bhāgavatam*, from which the verses of the *Bhakti-ratnāvalī* have been culled, again and again emphasizes the unity of *bhakti*, *jñāna*, and *vairāgya*—devotion, knowledge, and non-attachment—and never speaks of *bhakti* alone singly by itself. That devotion is spurious, not genuine, which does not lead to non-attachment, and non-attachment cannot come unless one has a knowledge of the utter hollowness, absolute worthlessness of all worldly things. If one is moved emotionally in the name of the Lord and sheds tears but at the same time feels the same attachment to the things of the world, he is no *bhakta* or devotee in the true sense of the term. As the great Śaṅkarācārya, in his *Brahma-Sūtra-bhāṣya*, points out in the very beginning that one who has truly known the Brahman as his very self can no longer be a worldly man as before, *nāvagatabrahmātmabhāvasya yathāpūrvam saṁsāritvam*. The test of a true *jñāni* or a true *bhakta* is the same: he is completely non-attached to all outer objects. This non-attachment is born out of illumination or knowledge and devotion or *bhakti* gives birth to this illumination. This is how the three are inseparably connected with each other in an indissoluble tie.

Attachment to the Lord, awareness of Him, and detachment from the world are thus eternally bound up and inseparable by nature but at the root of all the three the sap or sustenance is provided by *śravaṇa* or *pānena te deva kathāsudhāyāḥ*, the drinking of the nectar of the

Lord's glory. In order to signify the true nature of this hearing, which is not just merely a passive act of lending the ears to some outer words, the *Bhāgavatam* chooses to call it an act of inhaling or *jighranti karnavivaraiḥ*, smelling through the apertures of the ears. Intoxicated by the fragrance, one seizes those lotus feet in earnest devotion, *bhaktiā grhīta-caraṇāḥ parayā ca* and being thus seized or held by the feet, the Lord is no longer able to move out or leave the lotus of the heart of such a devotee, who has now become his own man or kinsman, *teṣāṁ nāpaiśi nātha hṛdayāmburuhāt svapumsām*.

The compiler of the *Bhakti-ratnāvalī* in order to emphasize the nature of direct experience of *śravaṇa* and permeation of the entire self by it, very aptly places in the very next verse the imagery of an elephant taking a plunge in the cool waters of a flowing stream, being burnt and extremely tormented by the heat of the flaming fire and thirst. The elephant in this case is none but the mind, *mano vāraṇaḥ*, which is burnt and tormented by the vicissitudes of life, *kṣeṣadāvāgnidagdhaḥ* and the flowing stream is nothing but the nectarean river of the glories of the Lord, *tvatkathāmrṣṭa-pīyūsanadyām*. Having taken the plunge once, the mind in the form of the elephant forgets all its torment, *na sasmāra dāvam* and would not like to come out of the cool soothing stream, *na niskrāmati*, having been completely identified with the cosmic consciousness, *brahmasaṁpannavannaḥ*.

Like *ghrāṇa* or inhalation described in the previous verse, here it is *snāna*, a total bath by which one becomes soaked through and through.\*

\*Based on discourses (R. K. Bhuwalka Lectures) by Govinda Gopal Mukherjee on *Bhakti-ratnāvalī* in March 1991.



## SPECTRUM

Both well and sick, I have ever willingly suffered myself to obey the appetites that pressed upon me. I give great authority to my propensions and desires.... Whatever I take against my liking, does me harm; and nothing hurts me, that I eat with appetite and delight. I never received harm by any action that was very pleasant to me; and accordingly have made all medicinal conclusions largely give way to my pleasure;...

—MONTAIGNE

Most of the crimes which disturb the internal peace of society are produced by the restraints which the necessary, but unequal, laws of property have imposed on the appetites of mankind, by confining to a few the possession of those objects that are coveted by many....

—GIBBON

There they thir fill of Love and Loves disport Took largely,... till dewie sleep Oppress'd them, wearied with thir amorous play... up they rose As from unrest, and, each the other viewing, Soon found thir Eyes how op'nd, and thir minds How dark'nd; innocence, that as a veile Had shadow'd them from knowing ill, was gon,... They destitute and bare Of all thir vertue: silent, and in face Confounded long they sate, as struck'n mute,...

—MILTON

Elagabalus (the emperor) ... abandoned himself to the grossest pleasures with ungoverned fury, and soon found disgust and satiety in the midst of his enjoyments.

—GIBBON

True Libertie ... alwayes with right Reason dwells Twinn'd, and from her hath no diuidual being : Reason in man obscur'd, or not obeyd, Immediately inordinate desires And upstart Passions catch the Government From Reason, and to servitude reduce Man till then free.

—MILTON

The moral tragedy of human life comes almost wholly from the fact that the link is ruptured which normally should hold between vision of the truth and action,... And the consciousness of inward hollowness that accrues from habitually seeing the better only to do the worse, is one of the saddest feelings one can bear with him through this vale of tears.

—JAMES

Ingersoll once said to me: 'I believe in making the most out of this world, in squeezing the orange dry, because this world is all we are sure of.' I replied: 'I know a better way to squeeze the orange of this world than you do, and I get more out of it. I know I cannot die, so I am not in a hurry; I know there is no fear, so I enjoy the squeezing. I have no duty, no bondage of wife and children and property; I can love all men and women. Everyone is God to me. Think of the joy of loving man as God! Squeeze your orange this way and get ten thousandfold more out of it. Get every single drop.'

—VIVEKANANDA

[Condensed and rearranged]



## INTERCULTURAL NEWS AND VIEWS

### World Summit for Children

ACCORDING TO the UN press releases, New York, the World Summit for Children was held on 30 September 1990 in the General Assembly Hall. Attended by 72 heads of State or Government, it began with welcoming statements by the two Co-Chairmen, President Moussa Traore of Mali and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada, and by Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

In his statement, the Secretary-General said the summit represented a commitment at the highest level to build a world order that would guard the most precious resource of the human race, its children. Such a world would not be ravaged by violent conflict, disfigured by poverty, plagued by crime, or scarred by repression.

At the end of the summit the heads of State or Government signed the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, committing themselves to a 10-point programme to protect the rights of children and improve their lives. A Plan of Action for implementing the Declaration was also adopted.

#### SUMMIT DECLARATION

The leaders undertook a commitment to:

—(1) Work to promote the earliest possible ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

—(2) work for a solid effort of national and international action to enhance children's health, promote pre-natal care and lower infant and child mortality, and promote the provision of clean water and universal access to sanitation.

—(3) Work for optimal growth and

development in childhood, through measures to eradicate hunger, malnutrition and famine.

—(4) Work to strengthen the role and status of women, promote responsible planning of family size, child spacing, breast-feeding and safe motherhood.

—(5) Work for respect for the role of the family in providing for children and for recognition of the special needs of children who are separated from their families.

—(6) Work for programmes that reduce illiteracy and provide educational opportunities for all children, irrespective of their background and gender, and that prepare children for productive employment.

—(7) Work to ameliorate the plight of millions of children who live in especially difficult circumstances—as victims of apartheid and foreign occupation, orphans, street children, children of migrant workers, displaced children, victims of disasters and abused, socially disadvantaged, exploited and refugee children.

—(8) Work to protect children from the scourge of war and to take measures to prevent further armed conflicts, in order to give children everywhere a peaceful and secure future, and to ask that periods of tranquillity and special relief corridors be observed for the benefit of children where war and violence are still taking place.

—(9) Work for common measures for the protection of the environment at all levels, so that all children can enjoy a safer and healthier future.

—(10) Work for a global attack on poverty, which would require the promotion of growth and development in all States, through national and international co-operation.



# **Seminar on 'Indological Studies and Research in India: Progress and Prospects'**

The Institute is trying to compile information on work being done by institutions in India and outside in the field of Indology. As a preliminary to this project a seminar on 'Indological Studies and Research in India: Progress and Prospects' was held at the Institute on 4 and 5 January 1991 in the Vivekananda Hall. The seminar was attended by a galaxy of scholars in the field of Indological studies from almost all parts of India.

Mr Justice A. N. Ray, formerly Chief Justice of India, presided over the inaugural session. Welcoming the delegates to the seminar, Swami Lokeshwarananda remarked that Indological studies were given prime importance in most foreign universities but in India these studies unfortunately went by default, science and technology dominating the scene of national life. Financial constraints notwithstanding, we must not play down the importance of such studies. There should be more in-depth studies of this discipline to bring about an awareness in the coming generations of the rich heritage of our land and of the glory that was India.

Prof. Sibajiban Bhattacharyya, formerly George V Professor of Philosophy, Calcutta University, in his inaugural address pointed out the meaning, due importance, and value of Indological studies.

After the inaugural session, the first academic session started with Prof. Sibajiban Bhattacharyya as chairman. Papers were presented by Dr B. N. Mukherjee, Carmichael Professor of Ancient Indian History, Calcutta University; Dr R. T. Vyas, Director, Oriental Institute, M. S. University of Baroda, Vadodara; and Dr S. Arasarat-

nam, Professor of History, the University of New England Armidale, Australia. The discussion part of the session was very lively and informative.

Dr Govinda Gopal Mukherjee, formerly Professor and Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Burdwan University, was the chairman of the second academic session. Papers were presented by Dr Dileep Kumar Kanjilal, Principal, Govt. Sanskrit College, Calcutta; Dr Shiv Kumar Mishra, Principal, Ganganath Jha Kendriya Sanskrita Vidya-peetha, Allahabad; and Dr K. Rajagopalachar, Director, Oriental Research Institute, Mysore. The chairman in his address pointed out that a co-ordination of the research centres in different parts of India was the desideratum of prime importance. Transmission of research information from one centre to another should be encouraged. But they did not have any such co-ordination to avoid overlapping. It had been found that some region had some special aptitudes for studies of a particular aspect of Indology, e.g. Navya-Nyāya in the eastern region. This should be taken into reckoning. Emphasis should be given to such special interests cum aptitude of the respective regions. For carrying out research work, requisite liberal grants should be made available.

On January 5, the third academic session started with Dr Anantalal Thakur, formerly Director, Mithila Institute, Darbhanga University, as chairman. Papers were presented by Dr M. Srimannarayana Murti, Director, Oriental Research Institute, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati; Dr S. S. Janaki, Director, Kuppuswamy Sastri Research Institute, Madras; Mr K. Subrahmaniam, The Mythic Society, Bangalore; and Dr B. B. Chaubey, Director, Vishveshvaranand Vishva Bandhu Institute of



Sanskrit and Indological Studies, Hosh-iarpur. The session went into detailed deliberations and analysis on the role, activities, prospects, problems, and research works carried on in each Institute.

The fourth academic session started in the afternoon. Dr Sitanath Goswami, Professor of Sanskrit, Jadavpur University, was the chairman. Dr R. C. Sharma, Director, Indian Museum, Calcutta; Professor Srimannarayan Mishra, Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Benaras Hindu University; and Dr Heramba Chatterjee Sastri, Secretary, Sanskrit Sahitya Parishat, Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta, presented their papers.

After the presentation of the papers and discussion, the chairman delivered his address. He said the research institutes were rendering yeoman service although under difficulties. Ours being a poor country, he observed, the progress was slow. He thought that Indological studies should have a connection with modern sciences. He said that it was a stark reality that only students of average merit came for Indological studies or Sanskrit, because studying these would give them no benefit in terms of employment, better employment prospects, etc. The present research scholars of Indological studies are the products of the past. Bright students preferred science and technological streams because of their employment potential.

Swami Lokeshwarananda gave the valedictory address. In his speech the swami said, 'I thought Indology in India was dying, if not dead already. Listening to the speeches of the scholars here, I felt Indology was alive and kicking. Let us face the fact that this is an age of science and technology. Let us have science and technology, but we must also have a good grounding in Sanskrit. Without

a strong Sanskrit base our survival will be at stake. By learning Sanskrit, we come to know about India. The Sanskrit journal of Sanskrit Sahitya Parishat or Indian Museum may function as a medium of co-ordination among different research centres. This Institute is also ready to spare one page of its monthly Bulletin to publish information about the research work on Indological studies, provided those centres supply us with the materials. The present generation does not know enough Sanskrit and does not give proper attention to Indological studies. So what will happen to research activities in future? The old books and manuscripts have to be edited properly for new editions by persons who must have sound knowledge in Sanskrit and Indological studies. We must persuade the Government to make Sanskrit a compulsory subject at secondary and university levels. We cannot command respect as a nation without Indological studies.'

Mr A. N. Ray, formerly Chief Justice of India, proposed a vote of thanks. Mr Ray in his speech welcomed the proposal of making Sanskrit a compulsory subject. He remarked that our future lay in learning Sanskrit. The treasures of the country would be known by Indological studies. To know ourselves, to know our country we would require these studies.

### Special Lecture

Prof. P. Kumar Mehta, Roy W. Carlson Distinguished Professor of Civil Engineering, University of California at Berkeley, U.S.A., gave a special lecture on the subject 'Inexpensive Housing for Rural India' (illustrated) in the Shivananda Hall on 16 January 1991 at 5.00 p.m. Prof. P. Som, Professor of Civil Engineering, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, presided.



## BOOK REVIEW

*Radicalism in Advaita Vedānta* By HEMANTA KUMAR GANGULI. Indian Publicity Society, 21 Balaram Ghose Street, Calcutta 700 004. 1988. pp. 146. Rs 90.00.

THE PRESENT treatise embodies the Vivekananda Centenary Lectures (1975) of the University of Calcutta delivered in September 1979. It includes three chapters and two appendices. The first chapter is on *The Advaita and Common Sense Realism*. The topic has been discussed in four sections under the following heads: (1) Departure from Common Sense Realism, (2) Theory of the Indeterminable, (3) The Subject-Object Relation, and (4) The Hypothesis of Avidyā. The second chapter discusses the Doctrine of *Dr̥ṣṭi-sr̥ṣṭi* in five sections containing the following contents: (1) The Passage to Epistemological Subjectivism, (2) Existential Hierarchy—A Critical Review, (3) The Epistemic Fallacy of Externality, (4) The Self and Emancipation, and (5) A Critique of *Dr̥ṣṭi-sr̥ṣṭi*. The third chapter is on *The Neo-Vedānta of Swami Vivekananda—Practical Deductions of the Advaita*. In Appendix I Notes and References and in Appendix II Bibliography and Abbreviations are presented.

The first two chapters are highly technical. The author of the book rejects Vivartavāda and prefers *Dr̥ṣṭi-sr̥ṣṭivāda*, according to which the unperceived or unknown does not exist. He distinguishes this theory from Berkeley's subjective idealism. The author has not discussed the possibility of Ajātavāda, according to which there is no creation at all. Gauḍapāda in his *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* has propagated this theory and Śaṅkara has annotated the *kārikā*. *Dr̥ṣṭi-sr̥ṣṭivāda* cannot be reconciled with Śaṅkara's rejection of

Vijñānavāda, according to which an object independent of knowledge cannot exist. (*Brahma-Sūtra-bhāṣya* II. 2. 28-30)

In the third chapter of the book, the Neo-Vedānta of Swami Vivekananda has been discussed and the author considers this as a practical deduction of traditional Advaita. The most important practical deduction from the Oneness of reality admitted in traditional Advaita is the total abolition of all privileges—the privileges of nation, caste and creed, of riches and learning, of class and the individual. Swamiji made this practical deduction. His famous essay, 'Modern India', the author holds, 'should command the respect due to a masterly classic, even from a serious Marxist.'

The author himself being a serious Marxist compares Swamiji with Marx without forgetting their differences. In conclusion he says: 'In a certain sense, Swamiji's Neo-Vedantism is a fitting conclusion to the theory of Oneness of self and collective salvation of the human race, which is, ethically, the most impressive aspect of the doctrine of *Dr̥ṣṭi-sr̥ṣṭi*.' Swamiji, however, did not believe in *Dr̥ṣṭi-sr̥ṣṭi* nor did he reject the possibility of salvation of an individual. He believed in *Oneness of Self* and abolition of all kinds of privileges.

The book under review is really scholarly and it reveals the capacity of independent thinking of its author. We may disagree with him on certain points but we appreciate his erudite presentation and broadness of his understanding. The get-up, paper, and print of the book are good. A perusal of the treatise will be of benefit to the reader.

NIROD BARAN CHAKRABORTY



# CALENDAR FOR MAY 1991

	5.15	p.m.	Devotional Songs: In the Shrine from 5.15 p.m. to 6.15 p.m. every workday
2	5.30	"	<i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	"	Film: <i>Kārikā</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
3	5.30	"	<i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	"	<i>**Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
4	5.30	"	Symposium (in English and Bengali): <i>The Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna</i> : Participants: Swami Rasajnananda, Swami Jyotirupananda, Swami Bhairavananda, Swami Balabhadrananda/Swami Lokeswarananda Devotional Songs by Swami Balabhadrananda
6	5.30	"	<i>Kizhi—A Famous Place of Russian Orthodox Religion</i> (Illustrated): Alena Adamkova (from USSR)/Swami Lokeswarananda
	6.15	"	<i>*Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
7	5.30	"	<i>**Sāṅkhyā-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	"	<i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
8	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
10	5.30	"	<i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	"	<i>**Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
11	5.00	"	Vivekananda Study Circle
	6.00	"	<i>Śiṣur Mon Gaḍār Kāje Śiṣu Sāhitya</i> (Bengali): Subhas Mukhopadhyaya (Poet)/Gouri Dharmapal
13	6.15	"	<i>*Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
14	5.30	"	<i>**Sāṅkhyā-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	"	<i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
15	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
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	6.15	"	<i>**Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
18	4.45	"	Vivekananda Study Circle (Junior): Songs, Recitations and Stories about Rabindranath
	6.00	"	<i>Subhas Chandrer Jivane Swāmijīr Prabhāv—I</i> (Bengali): Nemai Sadhan Bose/ Amalendu De
21	5.30	"	<i>**Sāṅkhyā-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	"	<i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
22	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
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	6.15	"	<i>**Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
25	5.00	"	Vivekananda Study Circle
	6.00	"	<i>Subhas Chandrer Jivane Swāmijīr Prabhāv—II</i> (Bengali): Nemai Sadhan Bose/ Amalendu De
29	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
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\*\* Tarapada Chaudhuri Lectures

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(Continued from second cover)

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project, for the first time, India's accumulated wisdom in a planned manner with contributions from well-known scholars.

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In keeping with the spirit which animates all its activities, the Institute has a UNIVERSAL PRAYER ROOM, open to all, where people can pray and meditate in the manner they like best. There is also a CHAPEL dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna, the symbol of harmony and unity, where regular devotional services are held in the evenings.

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All correspondence to be addressed to:

Swami Lokeshwarananda

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*Bulletin*  
*of the*  
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## THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION INSTITUTE OF CULTURE

THE INSTITUTE is rooted in the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) who stressed, among other things, the equal validity of all religions, the potential divinity of man, and service to man as a way of worshipping God. Sri Ramakrishna's chief disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), carried far and wide these teachings which, really speaking, constitute the core of India's oldest philosophy, Vedanta. Later, in 1897, he founded, in order to propagate these ideas, a non-proselytizing religious organization, the Ramakrishna Mission, which, besides teaching Vedanta, gives concrete service to the community by running schools, colleges, hospitals, orphanages, and so on. Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission had 152 branches in India and abroad in March 1990.

### PURPOSE

ONE SUCH branch is the Institute started in 1938 as an offshoot of Sri Ramakrishna's first birth-centenary celebration held in 1936. With humble beginnings in small rented rooms in north Calcutta, the Institute has grown over the years, and the fact that it now occupies its present magnificent building (completed in 1960) in south Calcutta is a testimony to its popularity.

While culture is the Institute's specific field of study, it is not national culture alone that it studies, but that culture which is the common heritage of all mankind and to which every race and religion has made its own contributions. Such a study, the Institute believes, will provide the necessary psychological background to the cementing process which technology has initiated between the races of mankind.

### ACTIVITIES

#### *Cultural Programmes*

Throughout the year the Institute has a busy schedule of lectures, debates, elocution competitions, seminars, symposia, study circles, and scripture classes, and religious

congregations, through which knowledge, both modern and ancient, is imparted to the public. Devotional songs and film shows also constitute regular features of the Institute's activities all round the year.

#### *Vivekananda Study Circle*

To encourage the youth to study Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature the Institute has several programmes of which the Vivekananda Study Circle is one. The Study Circle meets twice a month. The participants are also offered opportunities for field study of how the teachings of Swami Vivekananda are being implemented by the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.

#### *School of Languages*

Since language is a barrier to understanding others, the Institute regards the teaching of languages as an integral part of its work in the field of intercultural exchange. The Institute's SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES, with over 4,000 students on the roll, teaches 13 languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Persian, Russian, Sanskrit, Spanish, Spoken English, and Urdu.

#### *International House*

Attached to the Institute there is an INTERNATIONAL HOUSE meant for the Institute's guests and for those scholars and students who come from different parts of India as well as from abroad at the invitation of the Institute or of universities and other learned societies for study and research or simply for exchange of ideas with Indian scholars. This bringing together of scholars of different nationalities helps create a bridge that unites minds and spirits having different backgrounds.

#### *Library*

To assist scholars in their work of study and research, there is at the Institute a GENERAL LIBRARY, with a reading room

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The **BULLETIN** is published monthly. It reproduces lectures given and papers read at the Institute. The Institute invites scholars to deliver lectures or read papers on subjects which further the purpose of the Institute and contribute to its work on the national and international levels.

The **BULLETIN** also carries editorial observations on matters of cultural significance, book reviews, international cultural news, and news of the activities of the Institute.

The Institute is not necessarily in agreement with the views of contributors to whom freedom of expression of opinion is given.

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# Observations

## *To fulfil and not to destroy*

As QUOTED by Matthew, Christ is supposed to have said, 'I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.' Much was wanting in man and society before Christ. There was needless cruelty on common people by those in power. Society was splintered into small, warring groups. Temples swarmed with crooks of all sorts. There were good people, but they were few in number and they were helpless. They hoped, as they had been told, a saviour would come soon, but, meanwhile, their misfortunes were piling up. At last, Christ came. People recognized who he was and they were full of hope. But he was spared only a few years in which to give man any real relief. He had barely started when he was picked up and crucified on suspicion that he was conspiring to overthrow the ruling authority. Yet the thoughts he had planted in the minds of a close group inspired them to strive for sanity among people and help create a better world despite persecution. The movement Christ started still goes on. It is not organized, not visible even, yet individuals hear Christ's call 'Come to me' and they rush to respond.

Christ's predecessor, Buddha, also, declared that his mission was to fulfil and not to destroy. Both knew it was easy to destroy, but that solved no problem. What you destroy leaves its root and it soon appears again, maybe in a more virulent form. If you fulfil, you add what it lacks. Buddha and Christ were not social reformers. They filled in the gaps which had left society weak and vulnerable. They gave thoughts and ideas for man to follow: they did not promise a comfortable life, they rather promised hardship and suffering. They said no price

was too high for a good life and character. Be perfect—this was their message. To understand what is perfection—you have to have a model. These teachers provide that model.

Buddha was born into a society where scholars wasted time talking about academic matters, hardly ever paying any attention to improving their personal character. Religion and morality were much talked about, but seldom practised. Appearance was more important than reality. There were more hypocrites than honest and sincere people. The masses were confused, also exploited. There was no one to inspire, no one to show the way. At this crucial moment Buddha appeared, filling in the gap. His life was his message. He did not argue, he demonstrated. He showed how self-help was the best help, how strength was to come from within, not from without. He was more concerned with individuals than with society, like his successor Christ was. Each individual had to plough a lonely furrow. He reduced philosophy and religion to principles of daily application, to the practice of some basic virtues. The focus was always on being. He was a man of the people and for the people. He taught in the language of the people and what he taught was simple, clear, and practical. He had a tremendous charisma and if he so wished, he could have led a social and political revolution. He did nothing of the sort. He lived his life. And he wanted people to be entirely on their own. 'Be a lamp unto yourself'—that was his final message.

Thus he fulfilled when people depended on what others had said.



## CONVOCATION ADDRESS

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SUSHIL KUMAR MUKHERJEE, DSc, FNA

*Dr Sushil Kumar Mukherjee, formerly Vice-Chancellor, University of Calcutta and University of Kalyani, delivered the Convocation Address of the Institute's School of Languages last March. It is reproduced below.*

REVERED SWAMI Lokeswaranandaji Maharaj, Monks of the Ramakrishna Order, Principal Sarkar, Dr (Miss) Mitter, Teachers and Students of the School of Languages,

I feel greatly honoured by the invitation of the Institute to address this year's convocation, a solemn occasion for the School of Languages.

Let me begin by quoting one sentence from the writing of a notable linguist:

'Babies and languages are the essential ingredients of civilization, but speakers of language know no more where it came from than babies know where they came from.'

Man is the only animal to have acquired the facility of a language to express himself. Left alone in a wilderness, man would not have the need or the urge to do so. It obviously requires two to communicate. He could then discover that he possesses a sound machine located in his body. But the sound produced by him may not have any meaning to the hearer. The other person, if he happens to belong to the *homo sapiens*, would have made similar attempts, perhaps in vain. Then they may have looked, say, at the sun or the moon, the trees with

green leaves and colourful flowers, the streaming brooklet, the birds, and other animals, and so on, that is, at all kinds of visible objects outside of themselves, or else they may draw each other's attention to their limbs which in many respects look alike; or, one may lay his hand on his belly to express hunger and go for food, or smile as an expression of joy in each other's company, or express fear at the sight of a snake or a ferocious animal. In all these actions the movement of eyes, fingers, and other limbs may suffice to communicate with each other in the absence of any other suitable technique. But they are possibly bored by this kind of not-so-satisfactory means of expressing their minds fully. They may have then settled down to have recourse, more and more, to their fascinating voice machine, agreeing to associate all the objects seen and emotions felt with certain modulations of the voice machine. In this way perhaps words have been born — words being not merely a particular articulation of the voice machine, but having an agreed meaning, which itself is the expression of the mind, and an interpretation by the brain. It must have taken hundreds and thousands of years



to achieve this much. As new needs arose, new words were coined. In this way has a vocabulary been established. But words alone are not enough, they have to be arranged in a particular fashion to convey a specific meaning. Only if unequivocality is assured, will confusion in meaning disappear. Any arrangement of words carrying in its totality a specific meaning makes communication easy, worthwhile, and confusion-free. For this purpose some rules and guidelines are agreed upon. This constitutes, in brief, the grammar of every language.

No less important is the way a word is pronounced. Many of us have experiences in which individual peculiarities or nuances in pronunciation have stood in the way of understanding each other. There is the story of an American army personnel landing his plane near the coast on an unknown and apparently sparsely populated island. He came across a white person and wanted to know the name of the island. Being unable to communicate with each other with the help of spoken words, he asked the native person to put in writing. He wrote: *England*.

At the end of a seminar given by a Chinese scientist I was asked by the chairman to translate into English what the Chinese had just then spoken. Both myself and the Chinese scientist shared the same laboratory and I became in course of time, familiar with his English pronunciation, which to an uninitiated listener sounded Chinese.

If you permit, I give you another variation of the pronunciation game. In one of my travels in the forties, when English was taught more seriously, I met a learned Bengali couple (whom I did not know then) boarding the same compartment as mine at a midway station. They were pleading with me to accommo-

date them. After they were settled, they began to thank me, in English, for the help rendered. I was keeping silent, but at one stage I spoke in Bengali to say that they need not be apologetic. They became curious to know how I discovered their Bengali identity. I had to admit that it was their manner of speaking English that gave me the clue.

The difficulty of acquiring the exact nuances of pronunciation is real. Maybe the existence of so many dialects of the same native tongue has their origin in modifying pronunciation, and sometimes the word itself, in the process of assimilation. In fact, it is hardly possible to transcribe nuance of pronunciation of one language to another, especially if the scripts are different and so also some of the alphabets. The nuances are as much a part of the language as the meanings of words. Not every tongue is facile enough to respond to all kinds of manipulation. Practice and constant application are the only way to succeed in overcoming this hurdle.

The simplest and the most convenient way is to indigenize pronunciation and assimilate such modified words to enrich a language.

In some languages more letters are written in a word than are apparently pronounced. These extras are no doubt redundant and hence avoidable, but attempts to shear them off have not succeeded, perhaps because of a certain element of conservatism. A conservatism of a different kind is perpetuated in expressions like 'the sun rises', 'the sun sets', when the sun does neither.

Such instances of natural differences in pronunciation by speakers of foreign tongues are likely to be much less in written communication, provided the scripts are romanized or nearly the same. A word is no doubt a creation of the mind, and



a writer uses it with a perception peculiar to his own. It is quite likely that it will not tune in the same frequency in the minds of readers. It is no wonder that translations and translations of translations get distorted by the process depending on the nature and level of perception of the translators.

Vocabulary is not the only aspect of language, which is of importance to us. Grammar is a means to use the creative and logical aspects of the mind. In other words, the use of language is the use of the mind. This is one of the reasons for learning language at a serious level. In order to bridge the gap in perception of word-meaning between the writer and the reader, an attempt has been made to compile a dictionary by putting numbers against various meanings of the same word. The writer has to use the number as subscript which gives the meaning he wants to convey to the reader. The situation is undoubtedly very cumbersome, in the sense that the dictionary will be a big-sized one, and both the writer and the reader will have to refer constantly to the dictionary.

In man, language has an external form to communicate with others, and an internal form that determines one's reflective consciousness. Deprived of a language or having a rudimentary power man does not only lose the link with others, but his thought process is retarded as it is observed in the case of primitive peoples, infants, deaf-mutes, idiots, and aphasiacs, i.e. those whose speaking ability is undeveloped due to non-functioning of a particular part of the brain. The thought process is no doubt operative in certain animals but there is insufficiency of neurons in them, preventing ability to communicate. Language is created by cooperative efforts and not by individuals.

Without social contact, the language cannot develop in man in isolation—at most he may have rudimentary thought process and consciousness. Human thought being a cultural process, no thought is possible without language; simultaneously, thought manifests itself in language.

Nonverbal languages are of various forms, some are natural, some acquired by training, each having characteristic responses to sensory signals or evocators, whether optical, auditory, or olfactory. Such nonverbal languages are numerous. Inter-species as well as intervarietal communication is almost absent but each seems to recognize the presence of the other, either by the sound they produce or by smell or other sensory means. Unlike the human language, there seems to be no addition to whatever vocabulary they might possess, because vocabulary is the result of the thought process triggered by the urge to communicate—communicate not only regarding natural objects and phenomena, but also new ideas and explanations of observed phenomena, as well as of emotive experiences meant to communicate subtle feelings of the mind.

As information and knowledge grow at a rapid rate, vocabulary is bound to increase at an equal rate. For this purpose, it has become a normal practice to borrow and indigenize words. It is surprising that the old languages like Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, Hebrew have an almost unlimited reserve of core words, from which constant borrowing is being done to enrich one's language in the matter not only of vocabulary but also of nuances.

To start with, animal and human languages were not far from different, but by the use of thought process carried on by a much bigger brain, human language has progressed much ahead of



animal language, which has not the means to progress as the human language does. But it is true that a man speaking his own language will behave as animals do in respect of a language of which he has no knowledge or understanding. He then has recourse to sign language, or mime, or sounds that constitute a so-called universal language, not far from the primitive animal language. But because of greater intellect, man has been able to cross the language barrier and establish dictionaries of equivalent words in almost all written languages. This is an extraordinary feat, the evocative factors for which are not far to seek, namely, the urgent need to communicate with and understand each other and to exchange information and ideas on matters of common interest.

When a child says: I am going to eat or sleep, he is still using the animal language, but as soon as he is able to describe the colourful morning sun, he has crossed over to the human language. It is quite interesting to observe that some animals, especially monkeys and dogs, possessing high intelligence, cannot go far beyond the level of animal language. To them language remains external. Locking as they do the thought process, they are incapable of internalizing its language as man easily can.

Language and thought process being closely related, language ability of an individual is obviously a function of the brain. It is not the latter's anatomy but the number of neurons that matters. However, we do not know how many neurons are minimally needed to make human speech possible. But it can be somewhat asserted that, however primitive an individual of the *homo sapiens* might be, man can learn any cultural language provided he is given education before the age of five. For a civilized individual

of the same species acquisition of language before the age of five is much easier and faster, if placed in a linguistically equipped milieu. If a child, whatever its social environment, is not allowed to use the thought process before the age of five, its brain may have lost the opportunity for ever. An adult's thought process depends entirely on what has been acquired as a child.

Thought process is not an individual effort. The brain's function depends on its interaction with environment. A society together with its cultural and historical progression provides this environment. The latter is being continuously charged with the state of civilization and culture at a rate matching the growth of knowledge. A newly-born child has to face all that humanity has acquired beforehand through the collective efforts of many generations. They become in this way, an innate property of the brain of every child, where such transformations take place as are conducive to the creation of a means of expression as well as of thinking.

In many of the languages, a commonality pervades in the use of words describing familial connections. This has led to the search for a common ancestral language. This search is in many respects fascinating but at the same time frustrating. So far some 1500 words of Nostratic, a protolanguage, spoken some 15,000 years ago, have been reconstituted. This is supposed to be the root-stock of several Indo-European languages, including English. The search backward in time for common words identifying the same objects, termed deep reconstruction, stems from the notion that all human languages originate from one ancestral language. This notion of monogenesis is not shared by all the linguists. Those who are proponents of the notion have so far reached only



a short distance towards the goal. Others are of the view that this is unattainable and its pursuit is bound to be baffling. it is an asset. It is, therefore, painful to find that differences between languages are hoisted to create divisiveness.

Apart from the academic and commercial values, the learning of another language not one's own stems from the desire to feel at one with the people who speak that language, to be able to fall in love with their culture, philosophy, literature, outlook, tradition, in short, to identify oneself with their way of life. A language reflects so much and hence

Before I sit down let me congratulate the recipients of certificates and winners of prizes in the fascinating field of language learning and wish them the best in their future careers. Those who are graduating from the School of Languages should consider themselves as partners of a noble cause this Institute aims at serving.

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WHAT is especially interesting is that the chimpanzees' utterances are grammatically and semantically comparable with the utterances of children.... The chimpanzees' utterances, it has been claimed, can be analysed in terms of the same structural meanings and, considered in isolation from the context in which they occur, have the same kind of ambiguity or indeterminacy. Brown (1970) relates the set of structural meanings required for the analysis of children's two-word and three-word utterances more particularly to the sensory-motor intelligence postulated by Piaget (cf. Sinclair, 1972, 1973), with which, not only human beings, but also animals may operate and which develops in the infant, over many months, on the basis of his interaction with animate and inanimate entities in his environment. The implication is that the earliest, but not the later, stages, of language development are under the control of sensory-motor intelligence; and that, as a consequence, we might expect certain species of animals to reach, but not go beyond, these earliest stages. In view of the structural and functional parallels that have been drawn between human non-verbal communication (including the non-verbal component in language) and animal signalling-systems, one might perhaps go on to hypothesize that non-verbal communication, in general, is under the control of sensory-motor intelligence, whereas language in its fully developed form (though it continues to make use of the sensory-motor basis) requires a higher kind of cognitive ability. This hypothesis would also seem to be compatible with cerebral dominance and with what we know at present about the role played by the left and the right hemispheres of the brain in language-behaviour. However that may be, the fact that parallels can be drawn between the signalling-behaviour of children and the signalling-behaviour of chimpanzees casts doubt upon the views of those who would say that there is an unbridgeable gap between human and non-human signalling.

JOHN LYONS



# GOD AND MAN IN SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S PHILOSOPHY

ABHAYA DAS GUPTA

*Miss Abhaya Das Gupta is the Librarian of this Institute's Library. She delivered this lecture in Bengali last March at the Institute on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The following is the English translation of her speech:*

IN THE past, all Bengal heard from its poets the beautiful words, 'Man is above all; there is none higher than man.' Now in the modern age we hear once again that same message from a young sannyasi:

These are His manifold forms before thee,

Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?

Who loves all beings without distinction,

He indeed is worshipping best his God.<sup>1</sup>

Even more explicitly the young sannyasi stated that in the whole world, man is the highest of all creatures—higher even than the gods. No one is higher than man. No one before had raised man to a position higher than the gods.

But who is this sannyasi who speaks so boldly? Who is it who has shown us this new conception of man? He is Swami Vivekananda, the new Bhagīratha of India. Like the ancient sage Bhagīratha

who brought the holy river Gaṅgā down to earth and led her to the sea in order to rescue his departed ancestors, Swami Vivekananda has brought spirituality to India and to the whole world. He has rescued mankind from the doubt and despair caused by a materialistic outlook which was choking the very life out of the people.

Swami Vivekananda can also be compared to Arjuna who saw the form of the whole universe in Sri Krishna. Swami Vivekananda directly realized the universal truth of Vedānta, *sarvaṁ khalvidam brahma*—all that exists is Brahman—through the grace of his guru, Sri Ramakrishna. This profound realization of the divine Oneness in all that exists endowed Vivekananda with a new perspective on the traditional Advaitic Vedānta philosophy.

Since God is in everything and in everyone, Vivekananda tells us, we should do one of two things: either we should think our lives are inspired by God, or we should think we ourselves are God. In either case, our only duty is to serve

1 'To a Friend', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. IV, p. 496.



Him in all creatures. This new philosophy of practical Vedanta was Vivekananda's greatest achievement. This is what may be called the Religion of Man and he gave it to the world. He thus brought to all who would listen, the awareness of their own divine nature and of the divine nature of all beings. Vivekananda said that in essence all are divine, and all are One. Hence, we worship God by serving man.

Through this teaching, Vivekananda aroused in mankind an awareness of its potential greatness. He showed every country how to solve its internal problems and also how to deal with external problems involving other countries. This teaching of the basic Oneness of all brings about harmony between man and man, between country and country, between caste and caste, between religion and knowledge, between religion and work, between knowledge and devotion, between the old and the new—the mantra of Divine Oneness makes all these harmonies possible.

Seeing the One in the midst of the many, the realization of Brahman in all creatures—this in a nutshell is Swami Vivekananda's new religion, called neo-Vedanta. Like Arjuna who fought to maintain dharma, the moral order, Vivekananda also fought to revive dharma. He struggled against the social evils of his day and against the blind observance of religious rituals. When man was being humiliated through pernicious caste and religious customs, when men were being taught to hate one another, when superstitions were vitiating society all over the country, Vivekananda came to battle all these evils.

As Rāma had his bridge of rocks built for destroying evil in the form of Rāvana, Ramakrishna built another kind of bridge, Vivekananda, in order to destroy

the evils of prejudice and privilege. But all Vivekananda's battles were waged because he wanted to relieve the suffering of man. Seeing himself in all creatures, their suffering was *his* suffering.

Sri Ramakrishna, because of his profound experience of the Divine Oneness at the heart of all, also used to suffer the pains and afflictions of others. One day at Dakshineswar he saw two boatmen on the Gaṅgā fighting and felt their blows on his own body. He cried out in agony. When somebody beat a bullock, he rolled on the ground in pain. Again, when someone plucked a flower from a tree he felt a terrible pain in his chest.

It was this awareness of the suffering in the world that made Sri Ramakrishna formulate his principle of service. Seeing God in all, and especially in the afflicted, he wanted to do something to alleviate their pain. Compassion, he felt, was not the right attitude. He said, 'No, no; not compassion. Man is God. Serve man knowing him to be God.' These few words revealing a great truth struck a deep chord in Vivekananda's heart. A light flashed in his mind: Service to man is the best worship of God. These Vedantic words came to be one of Vivekananda's basic teachings. Service to man—but not just service to man. Service to man knowing him to be God. This, he said, is real religion.

Vivekananda declared that no one is inferior. There is no difference in essence between man and man. God is potentially manifest in all men, and all spiritual paths culminate in this realization. Calling all men 'The Children of Immortal Bliss', he proclaimed the eternal religion of India.

He taught that man must first know himself. When he has acquired faith in himself, he will be able to manifest his inherent power. Vivekananda said, 'He is



an atheist who does not believe in himself. The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is the atheist who does not believe in himself.<sup>2</sup>

In this new religion, one sees God in himself and in all creatures. The individual soul is nothing but Brahman. This central message of Vedanta Swami Vivekananda brought to all men. He said, faith in the message of Vedanta means faith in yourself because you are in reality Brahman; you are divine. Swamiji, the Vedantic sannyasi, gave this great teaching to all: to have faith in yourself, knowing yourself to be divine.

In Swami Vivekananda's short life we find many examples of Vedanta in practice. One example shows his attitude towards victims of racial discrimination. Once in a southern state of America, when Vivekananda entered a hotel, the man at the reception counter asked him if he was a Negro. Vivekananda did not even answer but quickly walked out of the hotel. Later his white friends said to him, 'You are not a Negro. Why didn't you explain to the man that you are from India?' With great feeling Vivekananda answered, 'What, rise at the expense of another? I did not come to earth for that.' In Vivekananda's neo-Vedanta, no one is inferior. He had renounced everything just for the sake of the poorest, the most wretched. All his austerities and sacrifices were carried out only for them.

One basic principle in Vivekananda's new religion was this: to attain *mukti*, liberation, you do not have to give up work. You can attain liberation by working for others without any selfish motive—in other words, without attachment. Here he

harmonizes work and worship. Serving God in man is the highest worship.

The Upanishads say he who knows all creatures to be his own self, knows God. Knowing all creatures to be his own self, a man's heart becomes vast. Vivekananda said, Do you love man? Where are you going searching for God? Is not your God in the poor, the suffering, the weak—in everyone? Why not worship them first? Let the outcaste, the oppressed, the ignorant, the poor be your God. Feel for them; work for them. He felt that trying to worship God while neglecting the poor and oppressed was madness.

Roaming from one end of India to the other and meeting all kinds of people, the Vedantic sannyasi had become Vivekananda the lover of man. This was a great victory for mankind. His immense love for God had been transformed into love for God in man. Because of this he could understand that it was foolish to preach religion to a starving man. His love for man forced him into many activities such as educating the ignorant, feeding and clothing the poor. He wandered from door to door of Maharajas' palaces begging for help for the helpless. He could not contain himself seeing all the suffering in the world, especially in India. He would embrace the poor and afflicted saying, 'My brother, my own!'

He told his followers that they had heard from their scriptures that their mother should be their god, their father their god but giving a new dimension he emphasized that the poor, the ignorant, the afflicted should be their new gods, knowing that to serve them was the highest religion. People had never before heard such a concept of religion. It was not only

2 'Practical Vedanta—I', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, p. 301.



Vivekananda's words that made such a great impression on everyone; it was the heart from which the words sprang. He lived what he taught.

Once while in America when he was a guest in the home of a wealthy family and given a soft, luxurious bed to sleep on, the picture of the suffering millions in India rose before him and stung him like a scorpion. He got down from his bed and spent the night on the floor weeping bitter tears. From such incidents we can understand that his concern and love for suffering people was not just a temporary emotional outburst. He really felt the suffering of others as his own. He asked us to help the poor and afflicted. He would be glad to go to hell if that would help others. 'Kindness and love can buy you the whole world.'

Sister Nivedita could grasp Swamiji's immeasurable love. In her opinion, if Michael, the highest angel in heaven, and the lowliest wretch on earth were both to appear before Vivekananda, his glance would fall on that lowly wretch and not on Michael. How Vivekananda loved the poor and miserable! They were indeed his gods.

He asked if the poor, the weak were not their God. To see God in them was truly worshipping God. If they saw Siva only in the image, their worship was but preliminary. Further, he wished to be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that he might worship the only God that exists, the only God he believed in—the sum total of all souls; and above all his God the wicked, his God the miserable his God the poor of all races, of all species was the special object of his worship.

He gave expression to his love for

all in a beautiful poem:

'Listen, friend, I will speak my heart  
to thee;  
I have found in my life this truth  
supreme—  
Buffeted by waves, in this whirl of  
life,  
There's one ferry that takes across  
the sea.

Formulas of worship, control of breath,  
Science, philosophy, systems varied,  
Relinquishment, possession, and the  
like,  
All these are but delusions of the  
mind—  
Love, Love—that's the one thing, the  
sole treasure.'<sup>3</sup>

Service to man knowing him to be God: this principle requires united effort if it is to be made a living reality. Because of this, Vivekananda, under Sri Ramakrishna's direct command, established a new religious order for the modern age. He said that service to the sick, the poor, the afflicted was the path to liberation. He elevated service to man to worship of God. This way serving all would bring one liberation and also benefit the people. With one hand worship, with the other service—both are combined in a marvelous way. On the one hand the destruction of selfish desires, on the other an expansion of unselfish love. With these two elements, Vivekananda built up the Ramakrishna Order.

He cried out by saying that men only were wanted; everything else will be ready, but strong, vigorous, believing young men, sincere to the backbone, were wanted. A hundred such and the world would become revolutionized. A man-mak-

3 'To a Friend', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. IV, p. 494.



ing religion was then wanted.

Vivekananda's fervent words bring to mind one of Tagore's remarks—In modern India, Vivekananda brought a great message unconnected with any particular religion. Vivekananda insisted that man was divine in essence. God wants us to serve Him through the poor and needy.

These words aroused the young, and many came forth to help Swamiji. That is why we find many kinds of service springing up throughout India—all based on renunciation of self-interest. His message gave great self-confidence and also power. Serving others does not mean a return to worldly life; it awakens and broadens man's mind.

In this way, man's work could be used, as in Vedantic disciplines, to remove man's brutishness and to help him manifest his essential divinity. Wherever there is man, there is God—Swami Vivekananda made this truth he had received from Sri Ramakrishna a living force in the

Ramakrishna Order. Never forget the greatness of man—he used to say, and he practised what he preached, serving all irrespective of caste or creed.

He wanted his followers to sacrifice their own lives for the good and happiness of the many. Man is the highest form of God, and serving him is the highest worship. On this foundation of Advaita philosophy, Vivekananda established his religion of Service to Man (knowing him to be God).

Pleading with us to sacrifice our all for love of God and man, he said,

'Give away, ne'er turn to ask in return,  
Should there be the wealth treasured  
in thy heart.

Ay, born heir to the Infinite thou art,  
Within the heart is the ocean of Love,  
"Give", "Give away"—whoever asks  
return,  
His ocean dwindles down to a mere  
drop.<sup>4</sup>

4 'To a Friend', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. IV, p. 496.

Look upon every man, woman, and everyone as God. You cannot help anyone, you can only serve: serve the children of the Lord, serve the Lord Himself, if you have the privilege. If the Lord grants that you can help any one of His children, blessed you are; do not think too much of yourselves. Blessed you are that that privilege was given to you when others had it not. Do it only as a worship. I should see God in the poor, and it is for my salvation that I go and worship them. The poor and the miserable are for our salvation, so that we may serve the Lord, coming in the shape of the diseased, coming in the shape of the lunatic, the leper, and the sinner! Bold are my words; and let me repeat that it is the greatest privilege in our life that we are allowed to serve the Lord in all these shapes. Give up the idea that by ruling over others you can do any good to them.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



## THE RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITION

BORIS A. IVANOV

*Professor Boris A. Ivanov is Acting Head of the Department of Indian History, Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow University, Moscow, USSR. He gave this special address in the convention on 'Harmony of Religions' organized by the Institute last March as part of the celebrations of the 155th birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna.*

HONOURABLE SWAMIJI, dear friends,

I was asked by Swami Lokeswarananda to tell something about 'The Russian Religious Tradition'. I fully understand it is not quite appropriate for me to touch upon this matter in the presence of Rev. Dr Aleaz, especially since my field of study is Indian social history. Nevertheless I will try.

One thousand years ago a young Russian nation, which was being consolidated on the vast expanses of Eastern Europe into a fast growing and dynamic state, began to realize itself as an entity. In search of a national idea, a spiritual core, a backbone of a nation, Russians turned their eyes towards what was flowering then in Byzantium, the so-called Greek Orthodox Church. 'Rus'—Russia was christened and soon this eastern branch of Christianity became the national religion of Russians.

To follow all the ups and downs of its history is a difficult task. Sufficient to say that there always coexisted in the Russian Church a life of the spirit and materialistic concerns, intense philo-

sophical search for truth and participation in worldly matters such as the secular functions of the State. But always in crisis, when the existence of our nation was threatened, the coals of spirituality, which smouldered under the ashes of earthly matters and political intrigues of the clergy, flared up again with the clean and holy fire of knowledge.

I call your attention to the life and works of great Russian thinkers, writers, and philosophers of the nineteenth century, such as V. Soloviov, F. Dostoyevsky, and L. Tolstoy. The search for universal truth undertaken by these great gurus has a universal significance, but it started from a national base; the seeds of their teaching germinated in Russian religious soil. The intellectual daring and openness of mind which characterized these great seekers of truth resulted in conflicts with the organized Church. But these very thoughts helped to renovate and bring a new life to the spirit of the same Church. The spiritual component of the Church in Russia was strengthened by its special role in our country. Because of the rigorous and



despotic regime of the Tzars, it was the Church which carried most of the burden of helping the weak, comforting the suffering, caring for the disabled. Common Russian peasants never discriminated on a sectarian basis in their attitude towards the helpless. There is a good word in Russian language: '*ubogiy*', that is, 'a poor one, a wretch'; literally, it means 'a man of God', 'a man belonging to God'.

In some degree, thanks to these activities of the Church, a social stratification and inequality in Russia was not perhaps as acute as in other countries of mediaeval Europe. These activities of the Church were sanctified by Christian ideas of the equality of people in the eye of God. The Russian Orthodox Church constantly stressed these ideas of equality and unity. Such a unifying role of the Russian Church was especially important for the survival of the Russian people as an entity on the vast territories of Russia.

From the philosophical point of view it is important to stress that the Orthodox Church considered itself a cosmic Body. So there is—if only inside one religion—a definite sense of the idea of Oneness. And if we remember that on the historical territories of Russia, on ethnic Russian land, other religions were not popular, it follows that this religious and ethnic cosmic Body was really perceived as an all-embracing cosmic whole like '*bhūmā*' including God himself.

In the same way, in the Russian Church the temple was believed to be a model of the world—thus a cosmic Body again. That all-inclusiveness in some respects brings to my mind the idea of Oneness preached by Sri Ramakrishna.

Today, I want to point out one feature of the Orthodox Church, the significance of which I fully appreciate here, after

getting a better knowledge of the activities of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission. These activities greatly impressed me in many ways, but especially in the interrelation and continuity of two kinds of work: seeking the truth for oneself, inside oneself, and trying to help other people to find their paths to the truth.

In our Church, with its many social functions and roles, there was always preserved an inner core—a monastery, or a hermitage, an ashram—the preserve of wisdom, out of which in a time of a danger or of a threat to the spiritual integrity of the Body of the Church the great sages came out to the people. The most renowned of them, Sergiy of Radonezh, in the fourteenth century, inspired and blessed a national struggle of Russia to overthrow the yoke of the Tartars, which had strangled, oppressed, and suffocated the soul of our people. He even sent two monks into the battle to die a hero's death. Saint Sergiy, who called for unity in the face of a national catastrophe of apocalyptic scale, inspires all Russians, not only Christians.

Later on there also came such gurus from the hermitages who dedicated their lives to the search for truth for all people. In communion with such monks many Russians of renown such as Gogol and Dostoyevsky found spiritual support in their search for truth. In his last days Tolstoy went to such a hermit.

In recent years the Greek Orthodox Church, like our whole country, lived through difficult times. A unification of spiritual life in Russia, an effort to force a monopoly of one—even a noble—idea of all-embracing but uniform happiness—all that resulted in denying the right of a human being to seek the truth in his own way. And the Russian Church—alas!—conformed and adjusted to political



conditions, having lost not only ideas, but the best minds, and so its moral authority. That was its misfortune, but that was also its fault.

But recently the ice was broken. Ideological constraints are loosening, searching minds are again free to try new ways. And the Russian Church is gradually shaking off its lethargy, inspired by its glorious tradition of spiritual life. Forgotten philosophers are now honoured. They include Vladimir Soloviev and the great hermit John of Kronstadt whose strenuous spiritual struggle, visions, and samadhi-like experiences are somewhat akin to Sri Ramakrishna's search for Truth. By the way, he lived at approximately the same time as Ramakrishna.

But now there is something new in Russia. The Orthodox Church is seeking

the truth, but not alone. Side by side with it, and on an equal footing, the paths to the Truth now include other confessions, societies, missions, in an atmosphere of growing tolerance and even acceptance—acceptance of the right of other people to seek the Truth in their own way. And here again is a distinct similarity to the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna.

There is hope that a free spiritual life will flourish in an atmosphere of mutual respect, that the realization of the Oneness of humanity will deepen in the hearts of the people. And my visit to the Ramakrishna Mission and my experiences here strengthen this hope.

And for this I thank the Mission and Swami Lokeswarananda.

Thank you all,

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FROM the start of the Mongol occupation the Russian Church had become the focus of a striving for a national identity. The church, which in the pre-Mongol period had been decidedly urban and oriented toward the educated classes, was now felt to be the church of the people and the expression of their aspirations; there was a new spiritual awakening in Russia. Monasteries began to be built in forests; a need was felt for silent, contemplative prayer and for a fuller renunciation of the world than had been practised in the Kievan period. These new tendencies can best be personified by Blessed Sergius of Radonezh and his disciples (of whom at least eleven are known), who played a leading role in the development of Russian monastic life. St Sergius played an active part in the formation of the Russian state, and the close collaboration of high-ranking Russian churchmen with the sovereign was a constant feature of the period.

NIKOLAY ANDREYEV

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the greatest of modern Russian saints, Seraphim of Sarov (d. 1833), would amaze his disciples by appearing to them with a shining face and would tell them: 'Fear nothing. You too have become as radiant as I. You yourself are now in the fullness of the Divine Spirit, or else you could not see me as I appear to you... God is with us.'

JOHN MEYENDORFF



DEBIPRASAD BHATTACHARYYA, M.A.

*Mr Debiprasad Bhattacharyya's lectures on the above subject are continued from the previous issue.*

Now, the adjective '*adhika*' which occurs in this *sūtra* means not merely more, as it usually does, but also 'greater', 'superior'. This latter sense of the term comes out clearly in Nimbārka's characteristically terse commentary: Brahman is superior (*utkr̥ṣṭa*) to Jīva who has to go through joys and sorrows; *Sukhaduḥkhabhoktuḥ śārīrādadhikam utkr̥ṣṭam brahma*. Nimbārka here takes '*adhika*' to mean '*utkr̥ṣṭa*'—superior—an interpretation which seems clearly to reflect the intention of the *sūtrakāra* (*sūtra*-author).

#### IV

I have dwelt at some length on this point because it has an immediate and crucial relevance for our subject—*bhakti*. To understand why, we must now try to define it. If an object contemplated by a person happens to be naturally sweet and beautiful, it attracts the heart of the latter. This feeling of attraction on the part of the contemplator may be called '*anurāga*'. If, now, this sweet and beautiful object turns out to be endowed with superior qualities, the emotion it evokes in the heart of the person contemplating it is not just '*anurāga*', but something more: it is *bhakti*. What distinguishes *bhakti* from *anurāga* is that in *bhakti* the sense

of sweetness and beauty that characterizes *anurāga* is accompanied by a sense of greatness and glory (*mahattva* or *mahimā*).

Perception of sweetness and beauty in the object of contemplation results, in short, in a pleasurable feeling of attraction towards it called '*anurāga*'; and when this feeling of attraction is accompanied by a realization of greatness in the object contemplated, we have *bhakti*. I have used the terms, 'perception' and 'realization'—both modes of knowledge (*jñāna*). This does not, however, mean that either *anurāga* or *bhakti* is a kind of knowledge. *Bhakti*—and, in a lesser degree, *anurāga*—essentially signifies an impulsion towards, a yearning to be united with, the object of adoration. It is the expression, in the human soul, of the Power that urges it towards union with the Divine; and the urge becomes stronger and stronger in proportion as the knowledge of the greatness and the glory of the Divine deepens, and for this to happen the performance of appropriate acts that have an inherent power to purify and elevate the mind is necessary. *Bhakti* at this stage is called *sādhana-bhakti* which is accompanied by works performed in a spirit of sacrifice; and as its intensity is determined by the degree of knowledge



of the attributes of God, it is not pure but '*jñāna-miśrā*' *bhakti*, that is, *bhakti* mingled with knowledge. When finally the mind (*citta*) of the *sādhaka* at this lower stage of *bhakti* becomes absolutely pure, that is, fully established in the state of supreme, *sāttvika* purity—the *prasāda* of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*—the all but ineradicable sense of the ego (*aham*) disappears. At this stage the *sādhaka* attains full knowledge of Brahman as manifested in the cosmos (*Kāryabrahman* or *Hiranyagarbha*) and thus becomes, in the language of *Bhagavad-Gītā*, '*brahmabhūta*', that is, one with Brahman. This Brahman, obviously, cannot be Parabrahman; he is, as we have noted above, the manifested Brahman, who is known, in Vedānta, as '*Kāryabrahman*', and, in the Vedas, as '*Hiranyagarbha*'. When this supremely exalted state of spiritual perfection (*prasāda*) is attained, all conscious spiritual effort, all *sādhana* or *prayatna* comes to an end; it is then, and only then, that pure *bhakti*, the *parā* or supreme *bhakti* of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* appears, in the absolutely desireless, pure, and serene soul of the blessed *sādhaka*. It is this supreme or *parā bhakti* that leads finally to the supreme knowledge, that is knowledge of the supreme Reality, of Brahman not only as the omniscient, omnipotent *Īśvara* but also as the all-transcending, all-sustaining, all-originating *Akṣara*, the ultimate divine Ground of all Being.

That *parā bhakti*, and *parā bhakti* alone, leads to the supreme knowledge, *brahmajñāna*, is stated clearly in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (XVIII.55):

*Bhaktiā māmahijñānāti yāvānyaścāsmi tattvataḥ.*

Through *bhakti* he comes to know Me, what My measure is and who I am in truth.

At the stage of the lower or *sādhana-bhakti*, on the other hand, the order is exactly the reverse: *bhakti* here is not followed, but preceded by *jñāna*; *jñāna* here is the cause, *bhakti*, the effect. *Jñāna*, of course, at this stage, does not, and cannot mean, the supreme knowledge, *brahmajñāna*; we have seen already what it means, namely, the increasing realization of the greatness and the glory of God, the immense, the astounding degree of power and knowledge that must have gone into the creation and the maintenance of this inconceivably vast and complex universe. The realization must lead, naturally and inevitably, to *bhakti*; I say 'must', because, if as a result of this knowledge, *bhakti* doesn't occur, the reason can only have been a failure in the knowledge itself; there couldn't have been, in other words, a real appreciation of the amount of power and knowledge that could bring this mysterious universe into being.

It will be clear now, I hope, why this lower *bhakti*, *sādhana-bhakti*, is characterized as '*bhakti* mingled with knowledge'—*jñānamīśrā bhakti*. When one speaks about *bhakti tout court*, without any adjective before it, what one almost always has in mind is this *jñānamīśrā* or *sādhana-bhakti*. Here too I shall be using '*bhakti*' *tout court* in this sense; when the higher *bhakti*, which is the real and pure *bhakti*, is at issue, I shall distinguish it as *parā bhakti*.

It is generally believed that *jñāna-mārga*, the path of knowledge, is meant for those rare and superior minds who are naturally prone to non-dualism—Advaita, while the path of devotion, *bhaktimārga* is eminently suited to those lesser, ordinary minds that are naturally drawn by dualism—Dvaita. This, to my mind, is the exact reverse of the truth. The truth is that the way of *jñāna* is essentially dualistic



in character, whereas the way of *bhakti* is essentially non-dualistic in spirit and approach. But, as this view is contrary to what is commonly held, an explanation, I think, is called for.

The essence of Jñāna-yoga, as we have had occasion to note in an earlier passage, is *Ātmānātma-viveka*—discrimination between the Self and the not-Self, Puruṣa from Prakṛti. These last two terms—Puruṣa and Prakṛti—belong, as we all know, to Sāṃkhya philosophy; I have used them because, Jñāna-yoga, as the Blessed Lord declares in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, is the Sāṃkhya way *par excellence*. The aim of the *jñānin* is Self-realization—*Ātmajñāna*; to achieve this he must reject not only the external world but the whole of Prakṛti consisting of the twenty-four cosmic entities or *tattvas* as not-Self—*anātman*. Hence the central importance of *vairāgya* in Jñāna-yoga; and *vairāgya*, renunciation, springs from *viveka*—discrimination, and discrimination is the result of analysis—*vicāra*. The minds of *jñānayo-gins* are, in consequence, distinguished by a higher degree of analytical subtlety and power.

The mind of the *bhakta*, on the other hand, is naturally and temperamentally inclined to synthesis (*anvaya*) as opposed to analysis or differentiation (*vyatireka*) in which the *jñānin* delights; it is fascinated not by the separateness but the inter-relatedness of things, and tends, naturally, to find unity in diversity, harmony in apparent discord. He too, like the *jñānin*, feels *vairāgya* towards the world and shares with him a profound sense of the evanescence of things; but his *vairāgya* is not a negative attitude; it is, as has been noted earlier, non-attachment rather than a sense of repugnance. The essential and fundamental *sāadhanā* of the follower of *bhaktimārga* is to cultivate, and by

cultivation intensify and deepen, a sense of the presence of the Divine not only in his own self but everywhere, in all creatures and all objects. And, as in his eyes the Divine alone exists, and nothing else, the path of his spiritual progress leads him from the Many towards the One, from Dvaita (dualism) towards Advaita (non-dualism). To get rid of all sense of dualism and thus arrive at full realization of Advaita by meditating on Brahman as immanent, and hence on the divinity and oneness of all existence—that is the way of *bhakti*—*bhaktimārga*. It is also the way of Advaita—true Advaita.

The state of complete, utmost purity and serenity of heart and soul, of *sāttvika prasāda*, mentioned above, is one in which the *sādhaka* is fully and firmly established in Advaita; it is that supremely exalted spiritual state of one who, in the language of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, has become '*brahmabhūta*', that is, one with Brahman as manifested in the cosmos—the Kāryabrahman or Hiraṇyagarbha; it is the great, all-pervading cosmic principle of Mahat in Sāṃkhya philosophy. It is the supremely serene and blessed state of the '*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā*' (XVIII.54) who beholds the entire universe within his Self—*yena bhūtānyaśeṣeṇa draṅsyasyātmanyatho mayi* (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, IV.35). It is, as the Lord declares in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (XVIII.50), the culmination, the supreme consummation of Jñāna-yoga—*niṣṭhā jñānasya yā parā*.

The follower of *bhaktimārga* too attains this Advaita state of the *brahma-bhūta* in which all spiritual striving, all *sāadhanā*, ends. The field is now prepared for the appearance of supreme or *parā bhakti*. A question, and a very pertinent one, may be asked at this point. It is this: Isn't Advaita the last stage of spiritual



realization? If so, what nonsense is this about *bhakti*, even if it is *parā bhakti*, after that?

The question is not only pertinent, it may well seem unanswerable. Nevertheless, an answer there must be, if *parā bhakti* is to be explained and justified. Now, at the *brahmabhūta* state the *sādhaka* experiences fully Brahman as manifested in the cosmos and becomes one with Him; at the same time he feels that Brahman, in his own essential nature, *svarūpa*, is beyond the created universe; in Pātanjala yoga, which follows Sāṃkhya, this same experience is characterized as '*sattvapuruṣāṇyatākhyātī*', which means the knowledge (*khyātī*) that Puruṣa or Ātman is different from '*buddhi*' (*sattva*), the higher intelligence. The experience is the same; only, for the latter, the *jñānin*, it is Puruṣa or Ātman, while for the *bhakta* *sādhaka*, it is Brahman; that is all.

The object of *parā bhakti* is Brahman in His all-transcending *svarūpa*, as the Ultimate Reality; as such, He is sometimes referred to as Parabrahman or Paramātmā. In the Upaniṣads, this supreme status of Brahman is often referred to as Akṣara. That this Akṣara is the final goal of Man comes out clearly in a memorable utterance of *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* in which the *guru* tells the *śiṣya* (pupil): 'Aim (your arrow), my dear, at that target—Akṣara.' The ultimate aim of the *sādhaka* whose soul is filled with *parā bhakti* is not, then, Saṅga Brahman or Īśvara, but this Akṣara who is beyond all *guṇas* and therefore called *nirguṇa*. It is a mistake, therefore, to suppose that *bhakti* means worship and adoration of Saṅga Brahman; the truth is that, for the *bhakta* Brahman is *nirguṇa* as well as *saguṇa*.

At the stage of *sādhana-bhakti*, the *bhakta* may, and often does, worship God in one of his divine forms or images

(*vigrahas*); this is known as *vigrahopāśā-nā*; in ancient Vedānta it was called *pralīkopāśanā*. It must be admitted that worshipping God in images, *vigrahopāśā-nā*, involves dualism, and cannot, therefore, lead directly to the supreme realization—*brahmajñāna* and *mokṣa*—liberation. And yet this dualistic form of *upāśanā*, if performed with single-minded devotion, by cleansing the mind and purifying the heart, leads to *advaita-jñāna* more quickly and easily than Jñāna-yoga, which, for ordinary mortals, is much (more difficult) harder to practise. So, though it begins with a dualistic approach—Dvaita, the aim of Bhakti-yoga is Advaita; and when this Advaita state is thus achieved, the soul of the *bhakta*, thoroughly purified, is filled, automatically and without any effort, with *parā bhakti*, which leads directly to Brahman-realization and through Brahman-realization, to *mokṣa*—liberation. So, the path of *bhakti*—*bhaktimārga*, like the path of knowledge—*jñānamārga*, leads, at the end, to *mokṣa*. Though it is not usual to regard the *bhakta* as *mumukṣu*, desirous of liberation, *mokṣa* is, in the Indian philosophical and spiritual tradition, the last word, the final goal (*puruṣārtha*) of Man. The *bhakta*, it is true, may not consciously aim at it; he may even repudiate it; but that, in itself, proves nothing; if it proves anything, it is that at a highly advanced stage of *bhakti*, at the Advaita state, to be precise, all desires vanish, including the desire for *mukti*—liberation. When it is stated, in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatā*, for instance, that *bhakti* is greater than *mukti*, the statement is intended not to belittle *mukti*, but to exalt *bhakti*; like all *arthavādas*, eulogistic exaggerations, it is not meant to be taken literally.

(To be concluded)



## Love Knows No Bargaining

Songs on Sri Krishna's love for the Gopis of Vrindaban would send Sri Ramakrishna into ecstasies. If in mood he would often improvise a bar or two to add a new dimension and depth to them. Gopis' love for Sri Krishna had no taint of earthiness. Sri Chaitanya looked upon himself as manifestation of Radha longing to be united with Sri Krishna. Sri Chaitanya felt he was God's handmaid. Blessed

*Gita*. The author of *Bhagavata* has compared this love to the all-consuming love of a woman for her beloved. Before the onset of that love all barriers between man and God are swept away. The devotee surrenders himself completely to his Divine beloved and in the end becomes one with Him.

Love between man and personal God may have the following connotations:

1. Shanta—peaceful love between father and son.
2. Dasya—God as a sovereign lord and devotee as servant.
3. Vatsalya—The relationship obtaining between mother and her child.
4. Sakhya—God and His devotee are friends—close and informal as between playmates. The relationship between Sri Krishna and Arjuna illustrates it.
5. Madhura—Love between husband and wife. It is love for love's sake, no bargaining whatsoever. St. Teresa and Indian queen Mīra represent brides of their divine spouse.

In Sankhya yoga, it is postulated that something cannot evolve from nothing. There is no creation but only manifestation

of what was at a given point of time latent and seminal. There is no annihilation either but only change of form. When a thing is in a latent form, it may escape notice. A tiny seed in the crevice of a roof is a potential banyan tree which one day spreads its massive branches and canopy of a million leaves. The ultimate realities, according to Sankhya philosophy are Prakriti and Purusha, that is nature and spirit. What was once implicit and subtle (avyakta) has become explicit (vyakta) and gross. Nature is both material and the efficient cause of the universe with its immense variety of things and forms.

Householders suffer in their life. Sri Ramakrishna disappeared. Atman is there again and again. In the midst of tribulations of their life, they are comforted of cheer, of hope and bliss would comfort them to a measure.

Sri Ramakrishna wanted to transmit occult powers to Narendranath and as to be expected he declined. Nachiketa would not stoop to accept worldly possessions from the god of Death in lieu of knowledge of the Self. He refused to be content with anything short of it. 'A golden chain is as much a chain as an iron one'—Vivekananda warned not to be beguiled. He warned: 'Do not be mere white mice in a cage with a treadmill, busy always and never accomplishing anything. Every desire is fraught with evil, whether the desire itself be good or evil. It is like a dog's jumping for a piece of meat which is ever receding from his reach, and dying a dog's death at last. Do not be like that. Cut off all desires.'

\*Based on discourses by Swami Lokeshwarananda on *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta* in April 1991



## One Sun but Many Reflections

'Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world, all our woe  
With loss of Eden.'

The snake tricked Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Adam followed suit and sampled the fruit and they earned God's displeasure and felt from His grace. They were sent out of the garden of Eden. This is man's original sin according to Christian theology. Man expiates the sin of disobedience by immeasurable suffering. Analogically, the Upanishads reiterate that man's cardinal error is to look upon the material universe, his body and his sense-perceptions as real. To listen to the non-self as real is Avidya. Vedantists say his ignorance is so inspired that he can hardly shrug it off. Avidya is real and co-existent with Brahman. Its vicious grip is as firm as a vice. It is because of this pervasive, intractable nature of Avidya that the scriptures try to ram into the mind of a seeker of truth the refrain, *tvamasi nirañjana, tvamasi nirañjana* (you are without any taint, you are Brahman).

In the dream-state the roles that we play and the activities that we are involved in disappear as soon as we are fully awake. So long as the dream persists the world outside is shut out. It had only the appearance of reality. In a cinematograph, the screen is real. It is constant and forms the backdrop for the pictures that are projected on it. The pictures are unreal and have no locus of their own. Their existence is only relative without any substratum or terra firma. Sri Ramakrishna would often say: the unity is real and the zeros that are added to it are

unreal, are nothings. They inflate the value so long as the unity or the one is not taken away. It is Sat or Brahman that props up the unreal. The tangible universe is nothing but the manifestation of the universal Self.

The body and its equipage the mind, the organs of perceptions and the *pranas* are superimpositions and attributes on the Ultimate Reality, the One existence denoted as Sat. Stripped of the superimpositions, the differentiating attributes of names and forms, it is Brahman, the pure consciousness that reveals itself in its absolute serenity. This truth is shrouded in darkness like the sun hidden behind masses of cloud. We mortals are so occupied with our body, with gross mundane things of life that we allow ourselves to be played with by things of maya which is unreal. This tragic delusion prevails till 'we free ourselves from name and form, especially from the body—when we need no body, good or bad—then only do we escape from bondage. Eternal progression is eternal bondage; annihilation of form is to be preferred. We must get free from all bodies, even a god-body. God is the only real existence; there cannot be two. There is but One Soul, and I am That'—as Vivekananda said.

Nirguna Brahman is without attributes. How then to describe it? It cannot be described through the medium of words. And the only option open to us is the process of negation: *Neti, Neti* (Not this, not this) as Yajnavalkya said. Brahman is not material and hence is not an object of perception. It is not empirical. It has no connotative reality. It is silence with capital 'S'. This truth is to be assimilated and has to sink in in our mind.\*

\*Based on discourses by Swami Lokeshwarananda on *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* in April 1991.



## The Body is the Dwelling-place of Brahman

Logic is not religion. Logicians are false prophets when they proclaim as true the multiplicity of the phenomenal world. The scriptures, the Vedas 'are more solicitous of our welfare than a thousand fathers and mothers', said Ācārya Śaṅkara.

My mind is the architect of my destiny. It is my greatest friend and it is my fiercest enemy too. 'The powers of the mind are like rays of light dissipated; when they are concentrated, they illumine.' Again, 'the mind is its own place, and in itself it can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.' Mind rules over the sense-organs, which are always outgoing. The pure intellect imposes its will on the mind and directs it to rein in when the sense-organs (the horses) tend to run wild and fly off from the charted goal of a seeker of liberation.

But what is man? 'Man is like an infinite spring coiled up in a small box and that spring is trying to unfold itself'—according to Swami Vivekananda. Man that grovels in worldliness and seeks pleasures through his body-mind complex from the world around him is only a tip of the iceberg—a pitiable thing, a victim of implacable, cruel fate. But man, man alone has the divine mandate to be a Buddha or a Christ—like the bulk of the iceberg under the surface of water hidden from view. Man has to discover this truth, his identity, being potentially that infinite ocean of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss as birthright. There is no ground for let-up in his endeavour to crush the barrier that looms so menacingly between him and his divinity. He has to retrieve the lost

ground—which is faith in his immense potentiality through control of the senses and meditation.

Śaṅkarācārya and other great minds insist that an aspirant has to seek liberation through purity of mind and spiritual discipline. Brahman is *ākāśa* and like *ākāśa* is all-pervasive, infinite, incorporeal, and subtle. It is *anoraniyān mahato mahīyān*—smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest. It is spirit and abstract and infinite without any limiting adjuncts. Only seekers of the highest order has access to comprehension of Nirguṇa Brahman. But what about the aspirants of lesser calibre and limited capability? The scriptures must make allowance for them too. They can worship the pure Being in their hearts. '*Divye brahmapure hy eṣa vyomnyātmā pratiṣṭhitah*'—The Atman is placed in the space in the effulgent abode of Brahman.' The heart has been compared to a royal palace and the body to a royal city. Though Brahman pervades the entire universe and is as vast as *ākāśa*, the aspirant can feel it manifest as a lotus-bud in the royal palace of his heart. Apparently Brahman the infinite is limited within a small space but it is independent of any limitation of space, time, and causation as ever.

The Buddhist school of thought describes the Ultimate Reality as the void (*śūnya*)—not an object of perception by the senses, not an aggregate of matter with multiple attributes of shape, size, colour, smell, and so on. Brahman cannot be predicated. 'The Supreme Self is not to be fixed; He is unlimited, unborn, not to be reasoned about, not to be conceived.' In non-dualism the aspirant meditates on the Absolute which is beyond speech and thought.\*

\*Based on discourses (Tarapada Chaudhuri Lectures) by Swami Lokeswarananda on the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* in April 1991.



## Sri Ramakrishna in the Guru-Mood *vis-à-vis* Sadhus

'At particular times', said the Master [Sri Ramakrishna], 'particular kinds of sadhus gathered here in large numbers. At one time, sannyasis, real *paramahansas*, began to pour in. Large numbers of those good people were to be found in the room (Sri Ramakrishna's room) day and night. And days and nights were passed in the discussion of Vedantic topics, such as the nature of Brahman and of maya, on "Being, Revealing, Endearing" (*asti, bhāti, priyam*).

'Hot discussions among them went on over these topics. I was suffering from acute dysentery and at the same time listening to their discussions on the Vedantic knowledge. The Divine Mother inspired me from within with simple solutions of those knotty problems on which they were unable to come to any conclusions. I told them of those solutions and their differences were removed forthwith.

'Some time passed that way. Visits of *paramahansas* gradually became fewer and fewer. In their place Rāmāwat "Bābās" (Rāmāwat sadhus are known as Bābājis or "Fathers" throughout India), men of fervent renunciation, devout and dispassionate, began to pour in, in large numbers. It was from one of them that Rāmlālā came to me. That is a long story.

'That Bābā was serving the image for a long time. He took it with him wherever he went. He cooked whatever he got by *bhikṣā* (begging) and offered the cooked food to it. That was not all; he actually saw that Rāmlālā ate, or wished to eat something, or wanted to go for

a walk, and so on.

'As days passed on, Rāmlālā's love for me went on increasing. As long as I remained with Bābā, Rāmlālā felt happy—he played and sported; but as soon as I came away from that place to my room, he also followed me immediately there. He did not remain with the sadhu, although I forbade him to come....

"Time passed in that way. The sadhu remained here for a long time; for Rāmlālā did not like to leave this place (i.e. me). The Bābā too could not go away, leaving behind Rāmlālā whom he had loved so long. Now it happened one day that, dissolved in tears, the Bābā came to me and said, "Ramlala has shown himself to me in the way I wanted to have his vision and has thus fulfilled my life's aspiration. Moreover, he said he would not go from here; for he does not like to leave you behind and go elsewhere. My mind is, however, free from sorrow and pain, as I find that Rāmlālā lives happily with you, playing and sporting all the livelong day. I feel beside myself with bliss to see it. I am now in such a state that I feel happy at his happiness. Therefore, I can now leave him with you and go elsewhere. Knowing that he is happy with you, I too shall feel happy." So saying, he gave Rāmlālā to me, and departed.'

We have to understand from this that the holy man must have had the taste of that highest form of love which is free from the slightest tinge of selfishness by virtue of the divine company of the Master, and must have felt convinced by the power of that affection that there was no fear of separation for him from the object of his love."

\*Based on discourses by Swami Rasajnananda on *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* in April 1991.



## The Absolute and Manifestation

How has the Infinite, the Absolute, become the finite? Why has the Infinite become the finite? What caused the Absolute? In asking such questions we have to suppose that the Absolute also is bound by something, that it is dependent on something; and in making this supposition, we drag the Absolute down to the level of the universe. For in the Absolute, there is neither time, space, nor causation; it is all one. That which exists by itself alone cannot have any cause. The very question, What caused the Absolute? is a contradiction in terms.

Coming from subtleties to common sense, we can see this from another side, when we seek to know how the Absolute has become the relative. Supposing we knew the answer, would the Absolute remain the Absolute? It would have become relative. What is meant by knowledge in our common-sense idea? It is only something that has become limited by our mind, that we know, and when it is beyond our mind, it is not knowledge. Now if the Absolute becomes limited by the mind, it is no more Absolute; it has become finite. Everything limited by the mind becomes finite. Therefore, to know the Absolute is again a contradiction in terms. That is why this question has never been answered, because if it were answered, there would no more be an Absolute. A God known is no more God; He has become finite like one of us. He cannot be known, He is always the Unknowable One. God is neither knowable nor unknowable, but something infinitely higher than either. He is one with us; and that which is one with us

is neither knowable nor unknowable, as our own self.

Now the question is: What are time, space, and causation? Advaita means non-duality; there are no two, but one. Yet we see that here is a proposition that the Absolute is manifesting itself as many, through the veil of time, space, and causation. Therefore it seems that here are two, the Absolute and maya (the sum total of time, space, and causation). It seems apparently very convincing that there are two. To this the Advaitist replies that it cannot be called two. To have two, we must have two absolute independent existences which cannot be caused. But time, space, and causation cannot be said to be independent existences.

They have no real existence; yet they are not non-existent, seeing that through them all things are manifesting as this universe. To give an illustration: The wave is the same as the ocean certainly, and yet as wave it is different from the ocean. What makes this difference? The name and the form. If the wave subsides, the form vanishes in a moment, and yet the form was not a delusion.

The Absolute is like that ocean while you and I, and suns and stars, and everything else are various waves of that ocean. What makes the waves different from the ocean is the form, and that form is time, space, and causation, all entirely dependent on the wave. As soon as the wave goes, they vanish. As soon as the individual gives up this maya, it vanishes for him and he becomes free. The whole struggle is to get rid of this clinging on to time, space, and causation, which are always obstacles in our way.\*

\*Based on discourses by Swami Rasajnananda on Swami Vivekananda's *Jñāna-Yoga* in April 1991.



## The Second Step to *Bhakti*

From the intake through hearing the glories of the Lord, *śravaṇa*, which is the first step to *bhakti*, comes outpouring, the second step of singing, *kīrtana*. One is now prompted to take the next step, viz. *kīrtana* or singing, which is described in the fifth string of the *Bhakti-ratnāvalī*. The first step, *śravaṇa*, was more or less passive while the second step, *kīrtana* is active. In other words, the participation or involvement is now more deep. Instead of just lending one's ears to the hearing of divine exploits and glories revealed in a divine life, one is now inclined to sing and describe them through the tongue himself and in such singing is the fulfilment of the entire being.

The very opening verse in this section is put in the mouth of Nārada, who is the singer *par excellence* of the divine name, as he roams about all the three worlds with his lyre just to sing and sing alone the sweet name of the Lord. He describes in this verse that the culmination of all the different methods of *sādhana*, be it austerity or sacrifice or study of the scriptures or anything else, lies only in this singing or describing the excellences of the highest and the best, the Supreme Being, who is the most adorable and lovable of all, *yaduttamaślokaḥ gunānūvaṛṇanam*.

This verse is taken from the first book of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and the next two verses are culled from the last book, in which *sūta*, the main narrator, is in ecstasy about the excellences of the singing of divine glories. In fact, the entire *Bhāgavatam*, from the first to the last, is nothing but the narration of the

excellences of the Divine and so at the end, the *sūta* dismisses all other talks as vain and useless, *asatīr asatkathāḥ* which do not relate to the Divine. On the contrary, the singing of the glories of the Lord alone is lovely and tasteful at every step, being ever new, *ramyaṁ ruciraṁ navam navam*. That alone is the very feast of the mind or the soul, which dries up eternally the entire ocean of grief for all men, *tad eva śāśvat manaso mahotsavam/ tad eva śokāṇṇavaśoṣaṇam nṛṇām*.

This *kīrtana* is of two kinds : *līlākīrtana* and *nāmakīrtana*. In the first, the different deeds and virtues of the Lord are sung, *guṇakarmāśrayāḥ kathāḥ*, while in the second, only His name is sung to the exclusion of everything else. Much is made of the efficacy of the divine name, which, even when uttered unknowingly or inadvertently, is said to bestow the highest attainment or the utter release from all earthly bonds. This may appear as mere hyperbole but the fact remains that the divine name is the only thing in the world which is beyond the *guṇas*, i.e. untouched by matter or *prakṛti*. If somehow or other one can be in touch with it, the very moment he is lifted above, freed from all the shackles of even the most heinous deeds one might have committed in life. That is why it is said that even a murderer of a Brahmin or of his own mother and teacher or of a cow, *brahmahā pīṭhā goghno mātṛhā ācāryahā aghavān* is purified by singing the name of the Lord, *śuddhyeran yasya kīrtanāt*.

Such an extreme statement is confirmed through a reference to the story of Ajāmila, who was a most despicable character in life but in his dying moment called out to his son, Nārāyaṇa.\*

\*Based on discourses (R. K. Bhuwarka Lectures) by Dr Govinda Gopal Mukherjee on *Bhakti-ratnāvalī* in April 1991.



## Origin of Philosophy

There are different theories of how or why philosophical thinking arises. In ancient Greece philosophy was said to originate in wonder. Human beings are, by their very nature, interested in unravelling the secrets of the universe. So philosophy is essentially an intellectual enterprise which tries to satisfy the human urge to know.

Śaṅkarācārya in his *adhyāsa-bhāṣya* begins with an ultimate mystery—the subject and the object being contradictory cannot be united, yet in ordinary experience we find them united. That which is logically impossible is yet empirically experienced as actual. Śaṅkara's philosophy is an attempt to solve this ultimate mystery.

Īśvarakṛṣṇa, in his *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, begins by stressing the reality of human suffering which is threefold, caused by (i) intrinsic influences, bodily or mental (*ādhyātmika*), (ii) extrinsic natural influences, such as other men and beasts (*ādhibhautika*), and (iii) extrinsic supernatural influences like spirits (*ādhidaivika*). This human suffering or misery is taken to heart and constitutes a real torment.

Human beings being tormented in these ways are led to think about remedies of misery. Now there are various empirical methods of solving misery. For example, physical disease can be cured by medicine, mental distress by seeking and getting pleasure. Enemies may be won over by diplomacy and spirits by charms.

The question, then, arises: Where is the need for the *Sāṃkhya śāstra* as the only remedy of human suffering? The answer is that these empirical methods

do not produce either certain or final results. The same medicine is not effective for everyone suffering from the same disease; and diplomacy and charms may fail to win over enemies or spirits. The point is that man sincerely tries to put an end to all suffering for all time to come. The empirical methods cannot surely achieve this purpose.

Then there is scriptural means of terminating misery. By performing different sacrifices according to Vedic injunctions and performing other rituals, one is said to achieve happiness, for example, by going to heaven after death. Heaven is the abode of unalloyed, unending happiness. So by performing Vedic rituals one can put an end to all future suffering.

But Īśvarakṛṣṇa argues that this method cannot succeed for three reasons. First, the rituals are in part impure. Many sacrifices require the killing of animals which action offends against the Vedic injunction not to injure any living being. So sacrifices cannot bring unalloyed happiness, for by killing animals in sacrifices, one commits sins and must suffer painful consequences. The second reason is that one cannot stay in heaven permanently. For we go to heaven and stay there as long as the stock of our virtue is not exhausted. But as the stock of virtue cannot be inexhaustible, one has to fall from heaven sometime or the other. So one cannot stay in heaven for all time to come. The third reason is that the results of sacrifices vary in degree. One sacrifice leads to heaven, another to lordship of heaven, and each may be surpassed by a higher one. One who has attained a lesser good will be jealous of the higher good and will consequently suffer.\*

\* Based on discourses (Tarapada Chaudhuri Lectures) by Professor Sibajiban Bhattacharyya on *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* in April 1991.



## SPECTRUM

I looked with sympathetic awe and fearfulness upon the man, who in mid-winter just landed from a four years' dangerous voyage, could so unrestingly push off again for still another tempestuous term. ...It fared with him as with the storm-tossed ship, that miserably drives along the leeward land. The port would fain give succour; the port is pitiful; in the port is safety, comfort, hearthstone, supper, warm blankets, friend, all that's kind to our mortalities. But in that gale, the port, the land, is that ship's direst jeopardy. She must fly all hospitality; one touch of land, though it but graze the keel, would make her shudder through and through. With all her might she crowds all sail off shore; in so doing, fights against the very winds that fain would blow her homeward; seeks all the lashed sea's landlessness again; for refuge's sake forlornly rushing into perit; her only friend her bitterest foe!

All deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore. But as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God—so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety!

Bear thee grimly, demigod! Up from the spray of thy ocean-perishing—straight up, leaps thy apotheosis!<sup>1</sup>

Let us take our compass; we are something, and we are not everything. The nature of our existence hides from us the knowledge of first beginnings; and

the littleness of our being conceals from us the sight of the Infinite. Limited as we are in every way, this state which holds the mean between two extremes is present in all our impotence.

This is what makes us incapable of certain knowledge and of absolute ignorance. We sail within a vast sphere, ever drifting in uncertainty, driven from end to end. When we think to attach ourselves to any point and to fasten to it, it wavers and leaves us; and if we follow it, it eludes our grasp, slips past us, and vanishes for ever. Nothing stays for us. This is our natural condition and yet most contrary to our inclination; we burn with desire to find solid ground and an ultimate sure foundation whereon to build a tower reaching to the Infinite. But our whole groundwork cracks, and the earth opens to abysses.

Let us, therefore, not look for certainty and stability. Our reason is always deceived by fickle shadows; nothing can fix the finite between the two Infinities, which both enclose and fly from it.

If this be well understood, I think that we shall remain at rest, each in the state wherein nature has placed him. As this sphere which has fallen to us as our lot is always distant from either extreme, what matters it that man should have a little more knowledge of the universe? If he has it, he but gets a little higher. Is he not always infinitely removed from the end, and is not the duration of our life equally removed from eternity, even if it lasts ten years longer?<sup>2</sup>

1 H. Melville, *Moby Dick, or the Whale*, ch. 23.

2 B. Pascal, *Pensées* 72

[Condensed and rearranged]



### **Planning-in-Action: An Innovative Approach to Human Development**

Designed to accelerate progress in the field of human development and bring about the end of chronic, persistent hunger, an innovative approach to the process of planning was pioneered by The Hunger Project in collaboration with the Planning Commission of India towards the end of last year.

The following excerpts from an article 'Planning-In-Action: An innovative approach to human development' are reproduced from *The Hunger Project*, March 1991:

Seven essential components of the planning-in-action methodology have been identified. While none of the elements are entirely new, they have been combined in a systematic way that is already producing new possibilities for innovative and effective action.

#### **1. Reaching a common understanding**

Planning-in-action begins by organizing a group of thinkers, leaders and activists from many sectors of society to come together and reach a common understanding of the prevailing conditions and the major elements that must be addressed in the strategy.

#### **2. Creating a 'strategic intent'**

Once the participants have come to a common understanding, the next step in planning-in-action is to create a strategic intent—a powerful, unifying vision that guides the entire strategy.

#### **3. Choosing social indicators**

Once the strategic intent has been created, there must be clear, aligned-upon

ways of measuring when it has been achieved. In addition, to effectively focus attention on achieving the strategic intent requires having measurable, timely indicators of significant progress.

#### **4. Identifying strategic objectives**

The next element of planning-in-action is the identification by the participants of strategic objectives that, when reached, will represent significant progress towards achieving the strategic intent.

#### **5. Establishing and empowering the leadership to reach the strategic intent**

Once strategic objectives are set, it is necessary to establish a capacity to reach those objectives, and to continue to set and achieve new objectives until the strategic intent is reached. There are two groups of people that constitute such a capacity: a body of leadership and a group that provides background empowerment to that leadership.

While it is well-recognized that a body of committed leadership is crucial, it is almost entirely unacknowledged that an equally necessary component is a background of skilful empowerment for that leadership.

#### **6. Identifying immediate action steps**

The success of planning-in-action depends not on a detailed, long-term plan, but on correctly identifying initial action steps that will quickly produce feedback to the strategy.

#### **7. Sustaining the action**

As the strategic planning-in-action unfolds, several key components, inherent in this methodology, are required to ensure that action and progress are sustained.



## Foundation-Day Anniversary

The fifty-third Foundation Day of the Institute was celebrated with great éclat on 29 January 1991. The day-long function began at 8.30 a.m. when Swami Vivekananda's statue at Gol Park was garlanded by the Institute's participant Mr Jagadish Sahoo. At 8.45 a.m. lamps were lit at the front landing of the Institute's building by Swami Lokeswarananda. Monks, participants of the Institute, members of their families, devotees, and other guests assembled in the Shivananda Hall at 9.00 a.m. After chanting by Swami Chidananda, a group of singers led by Mr Rebati Mondal presented a number of devotional songs. Swami Lokeswarananda in a brief speech pointed out how the untiring efforts of the Institute's participants and the love and co-operation of its well-wishers had helped it to become what it was. His speech was followed by Swami Bhairavananda's reading in Bengali from the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother, and Swami Rasajnananda's reading in English select passages from Swami Vivekananda's teachings. The readings over, Swami Balabhadrananda sang a few devotional songs. After the songs, a Bengali film was screened in the Vivekananda Hall.

At 5.45 p.m. the annual exhibition of arts and crafts of the Institute's Sarada Devi School of Fine Arts and Crafts was opened by Dr R. B. Rybakov, Deputy Director, Institute of Oriental Studies, USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow. Altogether 250 paintings and graphics and 102 pieces of handicrafts prepared by young students of the School were exhibited. (The exhibition remained open to the public till 27 February 1991.)

At 6 p.m. the Foundation-Day meeting was held in the Main Foyer (Ground Floor). Professor Saiyid Nurul Hasan, Governor of West Bengal, presided. After invocation song by the members of the Institute's Vivekananda Study Circle (Junior), Swami Lokeswarananda gave the welcome address and highlighted the Institute's main activities of the previous year.

After the welcome address, Dr R. B. Rybakov gave the Foundation-Day oration on 'What is Culture?' Delivering his presidential address, Professor Saiyid Nurul Hasan remarked that the Institute had, over the years, become the focal point for international exchange of ideas and cultures and developed into a unique centre of learning and research. Mr Justice A. N. Ray, formerly Chief Justice of India, proposed a vote of thanks.

The celebration ended with the screening of the film *Buddhist Culture and Pali*.

## Birth Anniversary of Sri Sarada Devi

The Institute held a meeting in observance of the birth anniversary of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi in the Vivekananda Hall on 19 January 1991. Swami Lokeswarananda presided.

The first speaker, Swami Jyotirupananda, designated for the Mission work in Soviet Russia, paid his tribute to the Mother in his talk entitled 'Holy Mother: The Motherhood of God'. The swami in his speech in English said that the Holy Mother was the incarnation of divine Motherhood. To explain this, the swami cited some events from the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

Mr Sanjib Chattopadhyay, the noted Bengali writer, dealt with some facets of the Holy Mother's personality. He spoke



on 'Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇer Drṣṭite Śrī Mā Sārādā Devī'. He said that Sri Sarada Devi was a living example of universal Motherhood. Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi have shown that God-realization is possible even for householders.

Swami Shantarupananda, assigned to go to the U.S.A., paid his homage by saying that it was a unique phenomenon that she did not deliver any lecture, write any book, or leave anything as her message; yet her life itself was her message. She was a real Mother. The swami said, 'The important highlight of her life is her humanism, her immeasurable concern for her children. Her love was for humanity irrespective of caste, creed, or religion.' The swami reminded us of the important message of the Holy Mother before her passing: 'Don't find fault with others.'

Dr (Mrs) Irena Cheliseva, Russian scholar of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow, said, 'The Holy Mother represents the spirit of deep devotion and love. She is the only mother who can love her children without any distinction of colour or religion. Her whole life is an outstanding example of perfect purity, devoid of all superstitions.'

Swami Lokeshwarananda rounded up the discussion saying, 'The Mother was great in her own right. She has shown us the real meaning of religion. The life of Sri Ramakrishna as also of Sri Sarada Devi is an open book to us. She spent her life like other Indian housewives. In the midst of her domestic chores, one found her real character manifested. She lived in the world, but never was of the world. In a sense, Sri Sarada Devi did much more than Sri Ramakrishna. She was *Sarigha Janani*, mother of the Ramakrishna Order. Sri Ramakrishna was an elitist, fastidious in choosing the best

human resource. But to Sri Sarada Devi all were acceptable. She was Mother to all.'

## Music Festival

To commemorate the 128th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, the Institute arranged a classical music festival performed by a galaxy of maestros on 12 January 1991.

Inaugurating the festival, Swami Lokeshwarananda spoke on 'Swami Vivekananda and Indian Classical Music'. The programme comprised three sessions—morning, afternoon, and evening. The morning session began with a vocal recital by Ajoy Chakraborty accompanied by Sanjoy Mukherjee on the tabla. It was followed by tabla duet by Alla Rakha and Zakir Hussain, accompanied by Ramesh Mishra on *naghma*. The session ended with a vocal recital by Mallikarjun Mansur with Faiyaz Khan on the tabla.

In the afternoon session, Hari Prasad Chaurasia gave a flute recital with Sabir Khan on the tabla. Next Birju Maharaj performed kathak dance accompanied by Zakir Hussain on the tabla.

The evening session commenced with a vocal recital by C. R. Vyas accompanied by Samar Saha on the tabla. Next Shiv Kumar Sharma played on santoor accompanied by Zakir Hussain on the tabla. The last item was Bhimsen Joshi's vocal recital accompanied by A. G. Bando-padhyay on the tabla and Purushottam Walawalkar on the harmonium.

## Musical Evening

The Institute organized at 6 p.m. on 14 January 1991 a sitar recital by James Pomerantz (an American disciple of Maestro Ali Akbar Khan) accompanied on the tabla by Bikram Ghosh. It was followed by tabla solo by Pt. Kishan Maharaj.



## BOOK REVIEW

*Vivekananda: The Prophet of Human Emancipation.* By SANTWANA DASGUPTA. Sm. Bijaya Dasgupta, W2A(R) 16/4, Phase IV(B), Golf Green, Calcutta 700 045. 1991. pp.xii + 493, Price Rs 150.00.

THE BOOK is a product of the lifelong research by the devoted scholarly author on the social philosophy of Swami Vivekananda.

Miss Santwana Dasgupta, while presenting the Vedantic monk before us as a 'prophet of human emancipation', reminds us that Swamiji was a believer in the Vedanta, which is the science of all sciences and the fundamental base of unity of mankind. She also points clearly to the revolutionary concept of man and religion realized and propagated by Swami Vivekananda. Part I of the book (pages 1-108) deals mainly with the impact of Vedanta on sociology and political science and the conclusion of the book proves that the modern socio-political and socio-economic freedom is assured only by Vedanta and it is Vivekananda who turned our thoughts in the Vedantic way and thereby became our emancipator.

Part II (pp. 109-56) of the book deals with the historical, part III (pp. 157-210) with sociological, part IV (pp. 211-94) with political, and part V (pp. 295-348) with economic ideas of Swami Vivekananda in the context of the ancient and modern world. According to the author, Swami Vivekananda gave us a new concept of human development, a criterion of universal manhood, where all human beings may feel free—realize the greatest freedom (pp. 340-47).

This concept of development, free from conflict and competition, is the desire and demand of modern mankind. Part

VI (pp. 349-426) of the book deals with the impact of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda on the socialist countries. In this part Miss Dasgupta cites examples of the socialist countries like Russia and China where experiments for 'freedom of man' have been failing and where there is a demand of Vivekananda for offering a permanent base of human freedom, which is nothing but Vedanta or Godhood of man. The author concludes this part with the remark: 'Ramakrishna and Vivekananda with their message of unity and peace are the harbingers of this new revolution.' (p. 425)

Part VII (pp. 427-68) deals with the role of Vivekananda in the socio-economic and cultural transformation in modern India through the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission and similar organizations inspired by the spirit of Swami Vivekananda.

The concluding part VIII (pp. 469-74) 'Epilogue: The Philosophy of a perpetual Revolution' is the summary of the contribution of Swami Vivekananda to the world thought, 'a call to reawaken God in man, a call to recreate our beings'. (p. 474)

Prof. (Miss) Dasgupta, has to her credit maintained all along her rational judgement, critical outlook, historical facts, and scientific reasoning while studying Vivekananda.

Those who will agree with the author will find a reassured pleasure, and those who will not, will have to think more seriously before rejecting her.

The book deserves serious notice both from the sociologists and from all persons concerned with human problems arising out of material maladjustment.

SATCHIDANANDA DHAR



# CALENDAR FOR JUNE 1991

	5.15 p.m.	Devotional Songs: In the Shrine from 5.15 p.m. to 6.15 p.m. every workday
1	6.00	.. <i>Ramakrishna Mather Caturtha Parva—I</i> (Bengali) : Swami Prabhananda/Swami Asaktananda
3	6.00	.. <i>Ramakrishna Mather Caturtha Parva—II</i> (Bengali) : Swami Prabhananda/Swami Asaktananda
4	5.30	.. ** <i>Sāmkhya-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
5	6.00	.. <i>Vaidic Sāhitya O Śaṅskṛtīr Patabhūmikā—I</i> (Bengali) : Narayan Chandra Bhattacharyya/Swami Bhairavananda
6	5.30	.. <i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	.. Film: <i>Jai</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
7	5.30	.. <i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	.. ** <i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
8	6.00	.. <i>Ramakrishna Mather Caturtha Parva—III</i> (Bengali) : Swami Prabhananda/Swami Lokeswarananda
10	6.00	.. <i>Vaidic Sāhitya O Śaṅskṛtīr Patabhūmikā—II</i> (Bengali) : Narayan Chandra Bhattacharyya/Swami Lokeswarananda
11	5.30	.. ** <i>Sāmkhya-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	.. <i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
12	6.15	.. <i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmrta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
13	5.30	.. <i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	.. Film: <i>Dādāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
14	5.30	.. <i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	.. ** <i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
15	5.00	.. Vivekananda Study Circle
	6.00	.. <i>Law and Common Man</i> : Hon'ble Justice Mrs Padma Khastgir/
17	5.30	.. <i>Law and Common Man</i> : Padma Khastgir/
	6.15	.. * <i>Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
18	5.30	.. ** <i>Sāmkhya-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	.. <i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
19	6.15	.. <i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmrta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
20	5.30	.. <i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	.. Film: <i>Garmil</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
21	5.30	.. <i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	.. ** <i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
22	4.45	.. Vivekananda Study Circle (Junior) : Songs, Recitations, and Stories about Nazrul
	6.00	.. <i>The Religion of Sri Ramakrishna—I</i> : Swami Lokeswarananda/A. N. Ray
24	5.30	.. <i>The Religion of Sri Ramakrishna—II</i> : Swami Lokeswarananda/A. N. Ray
	6.15	.. * <i>Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
25	5.30	.. ** <i>Sāmkhya-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	.. <i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
26	6.15	.. <i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmrta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
27	5.30	.. <i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	.. Film: <i>Lālan Fakir</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
28	5.30	.. <i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	.. ** <i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
29	6.00	.. <i>Asians in America</i> : Renuka Biswas/Swami Rasajnananda



(Continued from second cover)

attached. The Library specializes in the humanities and social sciences and contains over 1,61,987 books and 428 Indian and foreign journals.

The Library also has a JUNIOR Section with over 5,409 books for children between 13 and 16, and a CHILDREN'S Section with over 12,779 books for children between 6 and 12. Children of both the Sections, constituting Vivekananda Study Circle (Junior), present regular musical and cultural programmes throughout the year.

#### *Research*

Calcutta, Jadavpur, and Burdwan universities recognize the Institute as a centre for learning and research. This entitles the Institute to guide scholars in their post-doctoral and pre-doctoral research. A Board of Studies and Research consisting of distinguished scholars plans and co-ordinates the research activities of the Institute. The Indian Council of Social Science Research, the Indian National Science Academy, Rashtriya Sanskrit Samsthan, and the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi, also recognize the Institute as a centre for research.

#### *Museum and Art Gallery*

The Institute has a small MUSEUM and ART GALLERY to help people, specially scholars from outside India, have a glimpse of Indian art in its diverse forms. It has four major sections: (i) Paintings, (ii) Sculptures, (iii) Folk Arts, and (iv) MSS. Attached to it is the SARADA DEVI SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS and CRAFTS for the members of the Junior and Children's Library.

#### *Publications*

The Institute's publications, including the monthly BULLETIN, represent a further attempt on the part of the Institute to help educate the public about culture in all its aspects. Its major attempt in this direction is *The Cultural Heritage of India*, an encyclopaedic work in eight volumes, six of which have so far been published. The speciality of these volumes is that they

project, for the first time, India's accumulated wisdom in a planned manner with contributions from well-known scholars.

#### *Prayer Room and Chapel*

In keeping with the spirit which animates all its activities, the Institute has a UNIVERSAL PRAYER ROOM, open to all, where people can pray and meditate in the manner they like best. There is also a CHAPEL dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna, the symbol of harmony and unity, where regular devotional services are held in the evenings.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORK OF THE INSTITUTE

AS AN INSTITUTION dedicated to the ideal of the unity of mankind, the Institute has endeavoured over the years to make people aware of the richness of the cultures of the world and also of the urgent need for intercultural appreciation and understanding. The keynote of everything the Institute does is: respect of others' points of view, and assimilation and acceptance of as much of them as possible for one's own enrichment.

#### MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP OF the Institute is open to anyone in sympathy with its aims and activities. An admission fee of Rs 5.00 and annual membership fee of Rs 60.00 or \$ 15.00 or £ 8.00 or life membership of Rs 1,000.00 and more entitles members to receive the BULLETIN, use the Library, and receive a concession of twenty per cent of the Institute's publications. One may become a benefactor enjoying all the privileges of a life member by donating Rs 5,000.00 or more.

*All correspondence to be addressed to:*

Swami Lokeshwarananda

Secretary

The Ramakrishna Mission Institute  
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Gol Park, Calcutta 700 029

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*Bulletin  
of the  
Ramakrishna Mission  
Institute of Culture*



THE INSTITUTE is rooted in the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) who stressed, among other things, the equal validity of all religions, the potential divinity of man, and service to man as a way of worshipping God. Sri Ramakrishna's chief disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), carried far and wide these teachings which, really speaking, constitute the core of India's oldest philosophy, Vedanta. Later, in 1897, he founded, in order to propagate these ideas, a non-proselytizing religious organization, the Ramakrishna Mission, which, besides teaching Vedanta, gives concrete service to the community by running schools, colleges, hospitals, orphanages, and so on. Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission had 152 branches in India and abroad in March 1990.

#### PURPOSE

ONE SUCH branch is the Institute started in 1938 as an offshoot of Sri Ramakrishna's first birth-centenary celebration held in 1936. With humble beginnings in small rented rooms in north Calcutta, the Institute has grown over the years, and the fact that it now occupies its present magnificent building (completed in 1960) in south Calcutta is a testimony to its popularity.

While culture is the Institute's specific field of study, it is not national culture alone that it studies, but that culture which is the common heritage of all mankind and to which every race and religion has made its own contributions. Such a study, the Institute believes, will provide the necessary psychological background to the cementing process which technology has initiated between the races of mankind.

#### ACTIVITIES

##### *Cultural Programmes*

Throughout the year the Institute has a busy schedule of lectures, debates, elocution competitions, seminars, symposia, study circles, and scripture classes, and religious

congregations, through which knowledge, both modern and ancient, is imparted to the public. Devotional songs and film shows also constitute regular features of the Institute's activities all round the year.

##### *Vivekananda Study Circle*

To encourage the youth to study Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature the Institute has several programmes of which the Vivekananda Study Circle is one. The Study Circle meets twice a month. The participants are also offered opportunities for field study of how the teachings of Swami Vivekananda are being implemented by the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.

##### *School of Languages*

Since language is a barrier to understanding others, the Institute regards the teaching of languages as an integral part of its work in the field of intercultural exchange. The Institute's SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES, with over 4,000 students on the roll, teaches 13 languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Persian, Russian, Sanskrit, Spanish, Spoken English, and Urdu.

##### *International House*

Attached to the Institute there is an INTERNATIONAL HOUSE meant for the Institute's guests and for those scholars and students who come from different parts of India as well as from abroad at the invitation of the Institute or of universities and other learned societies for study and research or simply for exchange of ideas with Indian scholars. This bringing together of scholars of different nationalities helps create a bridge that unites minds and spirits having different backgrounds.

##### *Library*

To assist scholars in their work of study and research, there is at the Institute a GENERAL LIBRARY, with a reading room

(Continued on third cover)



# *Bulletin of the* **Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture**

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The BULLETIN is published monthly. It reproduces lectures given and papers read at the Institute. The Institute invites scholars to deliver lectures or read papers on subjects which further the purpose of the Institute and contribute to its work on the national and international levels.

The BULLETIN also carries editorial observations on matters of cultural significance, book reviews, international cultural news, and news of the activities of the Institute.

The Institute is not necessarily in agreement with the views of contributors to whom freedom of expression of opinion is given.

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# Observations

## *The still small voice*

Is THERE such a voice as the title says? Whose voice is that? What is its function? Why is the voice so described: 'still' and 'small'?

The voice is God's—God speaking to Elijah on Mount Horeb. What did the voice say? It demanded the slaughter of all enemies of God. Elijah was willing, in fact, eager, to carry out the command. The voice was only testing. It meant no carnage, it meant only surrender to God as it turned out later. 'Go, and return to me'—that was the final command.

So, the still small voice always asks us to return to God. We stray away from Him, He calls us back to Him like the Mother bird does when she finds her chicks moving too far away from her protective wings. She seems to say at first, 'Will you please kill all my enemies?' The chicks, in a chorus, say, 'Yes, of course we'll.' They move as if they will carry the battle into the stronghold of the enemy. They start moving away from their mother, in search of the enemy. The Mother bird watches, amused. The little ones dare further and further. The still small voice of Mother warns, but the chicks pay no heed. Before any damage can happen, Mother rushes, and with some blows of her wings, draws them back into a safer zone. Does God do the same with man? Does He want us to fight His enemies? Who are they? Are they inside man or outside?

There are, indeed, many enemies of God and they are both inside and outside of man. Ignorance is the source of these enemies. It is powerful, with myriads of its offshoots. God created man to fight Ignorance, He wanted man to be His ally. Alas! he surrendered to it. God is

since then calling man back to Himself in His still small voice. Does man hear it? He does, but seldom obeys. The consequence is—he suffers. The voice may be 'still', and 'small', but it is pressing, even commanding. Man, however, pretends he does not hear it; he ignores it as if it does not exist.

Throughout history this conflict continues—the conflict between the still small voice and man's ignorance. There is never a moment when the voice is silent or wrong. Is it God's voice? Yes, if you believe, but if you don't, let us say it's your own voice, the voice of your better self. Suppose you're bent on doing something, and the voice within warns, 'Don't do it, it's bad'; if you do it you'll get into trouble.' You can't figure out whose voice it is. Does it matter? What matters is what the voice says. What it says is right, though you don't want to admit it. You admit it later when you suffer, when it is too late. Again and again, this happens, yet you ignore the warning the voice gives you. Why is it so? It's because of your ignorance, ignorance which is the root of your vanity and the attitude that you know better. The suffering continues so long as ignorance lasts. All the time the still small voice keeps speaking. It is like the Mother bird always concerned for her chicks. Finally, your suffering reaches its peak and your good sense prevails. You begin to obey the voice. As you do so, the enemy retreats, your ignorance troubles you less. The voice is now clearer and louder. Like the chicks returning to their mother, you are returning to God; you are safe on the path the still small voice points to you. The enemy—ignorance—retreats.



## RELEVANCE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA TODAY

SWAMI RASAJNANANDA

*Swami Rasajnananda, Assistant Secretary of the Institute, participated in a symposium on 'The Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna' organized by the Institute last May. A revised version of his speech is given here.*

SRI RAMAKRISHNA was broad as the sky and deep as the ocean. Whereas even some of his monastic disciples failed to fully gauge him, it was left to the genius of his arch-disciple Swami Vivekananda to reveal the unfathomed depths of his personality and elucidate his life and teachings from all angles. An instance may be cited of Swamiji's [Swami Vivekananda's] illuminating insight into the immeasurable character of the Great Master [Sri Ramakrishna]. Four days back, i.e. on the 1st instant, was observed the anniversary of the founding of the Ramakrishna Mission. Let us go back to the year 1897. On the 1st May in a meeting of the monastic and lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, the Mission was established as an organization for rendering service at different levels—from the material to the spiritual. In the second meeting on the 5th May, its aims and objects were adopted. However, doubts arose in the mind of Swami Yogananda, a brother-disciple of Swami Vivekananda. Hence he questioned him whether they were not straying from Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. Then did Swamiji say: 'The

thing is this: Shri Ramakrishna is far greater than his disciples understand him to be. He is the embodiment of infinite spiritual ideas capable of development in infinite ways. Even if one can find a limit to the knowledge of Brahman, one cannot measure the unfathomable depths of our Master's mind!'<sup>1</sup> Obviously, of all the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji alone could correctly comprehend the Master's life and teachings. So I shall resort to Swamiji's views in my speech.

### RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE

The significance of Sri Ramakrishna's advent and of the role he played would be appreciated if we ask and answer the question: What would have happened if he were not born, or rather if the phenomenon of Sri Ramakrishna had not occurred, in the last century? As you are aware, that was the time when the potent wave of materialistic culture that came with the western conquerors and that gripped the interest of those who received the newly-introduced occidental education was about to sweep India off

<sup>1</sup> His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, Mayavati, 1981, p. 250.



her feet and destroy her hoary spirituality. Had it succeeded—thank God, it didn't—India would have died, for spirituality is her very life. In that event what would be the outcome? In a letter Swamiji posed the question, Shall India die? and himself answered: 'Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct ... and in its place will reign the duality of lust and luxury as the male and female deities, with money as its priest, fraud, force and competition its ceremonies, and the human soul its sacrifice.'<sup>2</sup> What was needed to stem the materialistic tide that would have engulfed our motherland was not so much socio-religious reform movements as *anubhava*, experience, realization, so that a realized soul could say with authority to the modern rational, scientific sceptic: 'I see God. You, too, can.' As is well known, Sri Ramakrishna eminently fulfilled this need by his realization of God in His various forms as well as in His formless aspect by traversing diverse paths, Indian and foreign. Thereby not only did he save India but he also resuscitated and re-established religion itself in the world at large, enabling it to provide the spiritually starving humanity with the much-needed manna.<sup>3</sup> Thus he was an effective response to the challenge of the day.

#### RELIGION IS REALIZATION

If Sri Ramakrishna, as we have seen, was a necessity in the last century, the ideas he illustrated in his life have continued to be beneficial, they are also relevant in the context of the present-day problems

and challenges. Limitation of time will not permit me to list them all, much less discuss them, though. So I shall confine myself to two and touch on them. An important idea—and one which is cynically set aside today—is, religion is realization, not talk or rhetoric, nor politicization, nor whipping up communal passions and unleashing violence. The answer to the present communal challenge, as also what we need for our own spiritual well-being, is *sādhana*, sincere struggle to realize God, on our part. Sri Ramakrishna's experience confirms vividly the efficacy of *sādhana*. Not for nothing did he declare to the devotees: 'One should learn the essence of the scriptures from the guru and then practise sadhana. If one rightly follows spiritual discipline, then one directly sees God.... After the realization of God, how far below lie the Vedas, the Vedānta, the Purāṇa, the Tantra!'<sup>4</sup> These words not only inspire us to intensify our *sādhana*. We also learn that *sādhana*, rightly performed, results in direct realization of God. Religion is this realization, and nothing short of it. The idea must be burnt deep into our minds, especially these days when many a morbid accretion has grown. In 'My Master' Swamiji said, 'Man must realise God, feel God, see God, talk to God.... there is such a thing as realisation even in this life, and it is open to everyone, and religion begins with the opening of this faculty, if I may call it so. This is the central idea in all religions.'<sup>5</sup> Religion, then, is a serious concern involving the supreme quest for God-realization. Let it not labour under dilution or exploitation.

<sup>2</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. IV, p. 348.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Mahatma Gandhi's Foreword to *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Mayavati, 1971: 'In this age of scepticism Ramakrishna presents an example of bright and living faith which gives solace to thousands of men and women who would otherwise have remained without spiritual light.'

<sup>4</sup> *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, tr. Swami Nikhilananda, Madras, 1957, pp. 503, 504.

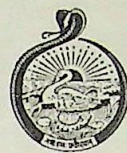
<sup>5</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. IV, p. 165.



## SYNTHESIS

Another idea which is no less important and relevant to this age is synthesis, synthesis of yogas. Swamiji wrote of 'the new religion of this age—the synthesis of Yoga, knowledge, devotion, and work'.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere he viewed his Master as an embodiment of the harmony of yogas in their utmost perfection and considered a follower of Sri Ramakrishna him whose character is perfect in all respects, but not him who is deficient even in one. There is also the snake-swan emblem/seal of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, which you see reproduced in shining metal on a pillar of the portico at the entrance of this Institute's building, conveying Sri Ramakrishna's message of synthesis. Having designed it, Swamiji explained the idea to an artist: 'The wavy

waters in the picture are symbolic of Karma; the lotus, of Bhakti; and the rising-sun, of Jnana. The encircling serpent is indicative of Yoga and the awakened Kundalini Shakti, while the swan in the picture



stands for the Paramâtman (Supreme Self). Therefore, the idea of the picture is that by the union of Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, the vision of the Paramatman is obtained.<sup>7</sup> Swamiji hit the nail on the head when he wrote that Sri Ramakrishna's teaching 'is that the best points of Yoga, devotion, knowledge, and work must be combined now so as to form a new society.'<sup>8</sup> Therefore, relinquishing lopsidedness and narrowness, we should strive for synthesis, for a healthy and happy harmony of all our faculties. 'We want harmony, not one-sided development,'<sup>9</sup> stressed Swamiji.

6 Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 493.

7 Ibid., p. 204.

8 Ibid., p. 493.

9 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 143.

This is the message of Shri Ramakrishna to the modern world: "Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticise no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realisation. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light."

The more such men are produced in a country, the more that country will be raised; and that country where such men absolutely do not exist is simply doomed, nothing can save it. Therefore my Master's message to mankind is: "Be spiritual and realise truth for yourself."

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



# SCIENCE IN THE WEST AND THE EAST—THROUGH HISTORY

S. K. BAGCHI

Mr. S. K. Bagchi is Director, Birla Industrial and Technological Museum, Calcutta. He delivered a lecture on the above subject in the Institute in May 1990 as the Institute's Sharmila Mookerjee Child Talent Lecturer for 1990. It is reproduced below.

I FEEL it an honour to be invited to deliver the Sharmila Mookerji Endowment Lecture. I did not meet dear Sharmila. I came to know about her from her disconsolate parents after she had left this world. What a gifted child she was! I have sometimes wondered why such beautiful flowers should wither away. Perhaps such mysteries of life goaded Gautama to leave his regal abode to search for truth. The same mysterious existence of life inspired perhaps Shakespeare to write, 'Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, And then is heard no more.'

Since Sharmila left this world India has changed. When I open the newspaper every day, I have a feeling that India will break asunder. Fissiparous tendencies like regionalism, casteism, religious fundamentalism, and separatism are engulfing the whole nation. Looking at the situation I am reminded of the lines of W.B. Yeats and Jibananda Das. Yeats wrote in the beginning of this century,

Things fall apart; Centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood dimmed tide is loosed, and  
everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction while  
The worst are full of passionate intensity.

Jibananda Das wrote in the same vein,  
A strange darkness has descended on  
this world.  
Those who are blind they see the most.

What is happening in India today is not because of the fact that people have become suddenly bad. This affliction of ours is a reflection of the deterioration of the socio-economic and environmental fabric of the nation. About 40% of the people of India live below the poverty line, 60% are illiterate. If we carry on like this, when India reaches the twenty-first century 50% of world's illiterates will live in India. Population is growing at the rate of about 15 million every year. This increase is equal to the population of Australia which has a land area more



than 2.5 times that of ours. We are in a vicious circle of population growth and poverty. Population growth has exerted a tremendous pressure on the four primary resources—land, water, air and bio-diversity—on which nature's delicate balance is maintained. We are losing 1.5 million hectares of forest every year. The total forest cover has dwindled down to about 11% whereas it should be 33% according to national standard. Denudation of forest in mountain areas has caused unprecedented soil erosion to the tune of 6000 million tons every year. This eroded soil is silting up the river beds and dams. Floods have become yearly man-made calamities causing immense hardship to the people, specially the poor ones. The socio-economic deterioration and environmental degradation are the root causes for the predicament which India faces today. This situation can only be altered by the application of appropriate science and technology. But science and technology only cannot change the quality of life of the people unless it is dovetailed with a proper social planning. A more egalitarian society has to be aimed at which will not make the poor poorer and the rich richer, as is happening today.

But one of the pre-conditions for the application of science and technology is to change the mind of the people. A proper scientific temper has to be created amongst the people. This happened in Europe before the advent of the Industrial Revolution between 1760 and 1830. My talk today would be to make a synoptic survey as to how this change came in European society and why in India the progress in science and technology gradually stopped in spite of India's significant advances in science and technology in the past.

We know that Europe went into a so-called dark age after the fall of the

Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D. By the fourth century A.D. the Roman Empire was divided into Western Roman Empire with its capital at Rome and the Eastern Roman Empire with its capital at Constantinople. Constantinople being situated at the confluence of Europe and Asia, the Byzantine empire flourished for about 1000 years after the fall of Western Roman Empire till it succumbed to the attacks of Ottoman Turks. After the fall of Western Roman Empire Europe gradually forgot the glorious traditions of Greek science and philosophy.

The last bastion of Greek thought was Ptolemaic Alexandria. Between mid-second and fifth century A.D. there were repeated attacks on the fabulous library of Alexandria by Christian mobs which considered Greek thought as pantheistic. The scholars of Alexandria gradually left taking materials and copies with them. Edessa, a Graeco-Roman city in western Turkey, not far from its border of Syria, became a great centre of learning. Nestorian Christians, followers of the fifth-century patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius, who affirmed the separateness of Christ's human and divine nature, considered as heretics by the orthodox, took shelter at Edessa. These Nestorians helped Greek philosophical and scientific teaching to survive. Syriac by then had already replaced Greek as the official language of West Asia. Nestorians translated the Greek scientific works into Syriac. When Edessa was shut down in A.D. 489 some Nestorians moved to the great Iranian intellectual centre at Jundishapur. Other Christian sects like Monophysites also came here and translated the Greek and Roman philosophical and scientific works like those of Aristotle, Porphyry, and Galen into Syriac. When Islam conquered Persian Empire all these manuscripts fell into their hands.

Mohammed was born in A.D. 570



570 62  
and died in A.D. 632. Mohammed himself was a great seeker of truth and knowledge. The Prophet's concern for knowledge and science will be evinced by some of his sayings. Mohammed said, 'To listen to the instructions of science and learning for one hour is more meritorious than attending the funeral of thousand martyrs—more meritorious than standing in prayer for thousand nights'. 'With knowledge the half of good rises to the highest of goodness and to noble position'. Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, lectured on different branches of learning. His recorded sayings are: 'Eminence in science is the highest of honours'. 'He dies not who gives life to learning'. 'Greatest of moment of man is erudition'. Such sentiments of the Prophet and his disciples animated all classes for a desire for learning. Within hundred years after Mohammed's death Islamic Empire spread to Syria, Persia, Egypt, North Africa, Central Asia, Spain, etc. Gradually, great universities and libraries sprang up at Baghdad, Salerno, Cordoba, Granada, Cairo, etc. Islam showed great tolerance to native cultures and absorbed the same. There was a fusion of the indigenous knowledge and the Arabic style of Islam. In this way the Arabs absorbed the science and philosophy of Greeks from many Hellenistic cities as well as the cultures of Sassanid Persia and the sciences of India.

In the eighth century, during the reign of Khalif al Mansoor an Indian scholar presented him Brahmagupta's Brahmasphuta-siddhanta. It was translated as Sind-Hind by the great Arabic scholar al Fazari. The golden age of Islam came in the ninth century during the reign of al Mamun. He showed favour to Mutazilite movement which believed that the faith could be supported by rational arguments and they based their reasoning on the methods used by the philosophers

of Greece and Alexandria. Al Mamun set up in Baghdad 'Bayat-al-Hikma' or 'House of Wisdom' where a whole body of translators, many of them Christians, were recruited. Where manuscripts of more important works did not exist, al Mamun got them imported from Byzantium. He also set up an observatory for astronomical observations. During al Mamun's reign Ptolemy's works were brought from Constantinople and was translated as *Almagest* in Arabic. During his time Indian numerals started being used in the Islamic world which was later transmitted by Arabs to Europe in the thirteenth century and came to be known as Hindu-Arabic numerals.

The libraries of the Islamic world had fantastic collections of manuscripts. Fatemite library in Cairo contained 100,000 volumes, elegantly translated and bound. It had 6,500 manuscripts of Astronomy and Medicine alone. Library of Spanish Khalifs had 600,000 volumes, with 44 catalogues. Andalusia had 70 public libraries. Every library had departments for copying and translation.

This resurgence in culture in the Islamic world gave birth to a host of philosophers and scientists who not only absorbed the philosophy and sciences of ancient Greece, Persia, India, etc. but also made original contribution in different branches of science. Islamic world gave birth to a host of philosophers and scientists who not only translated Greek and Eastern works into Arabic but also contributed towards the understanding of nature and science. Some of the great names of Arab philosophers and scientists were: al Kindi, al Hayatham, al Khwarizmi, Avicenna, the finest product of Arab renaissance, al Razi (Razes to West), Abu Musa Jaffar (Geber to West), al Beruni, Omar Khaiyam, and Averroes. Hence, when Europe fell into darkness Islam preserved,



nursed, and enriched with sedulous care the various branches of science and learning.

#### EUROPE REDISCOVERS ITS ROOTS

By the tenth century A.D. northern invasion tapered off and peace started descending in Europe. Crusades started in the eleventh century and continued for about two hundred years. Already by the ninth century towns such as Venice, Naples, Bari, Amalfi, later joined by Pisa and Genoa, carried on trade with Arabs, Sicily, and eastern Mediterranean. Crusades brought further contacts of Western Christendom with the lands under Islam. In the eleventh century the Benedictine monk Constantine the African was sufficiently familiar with the Arab scientific works. In the twelfth century Adelard of Bath is known to have travelled to South Italy and even to Syria. He translated Euclid's *Element* and many other works into Latin. Gerard of Cremona translated Ptolemy's *Almagest* into Latin in the thirteenth century. In the beginning of the thirteenth century Leonardo Fibonacci of Pisa travelled to North Africa. He acquired the knowledge of Arab mathematics. He introduced Hindu-Arabic numerals in Europe. This revolutionized computation. The chief centres from which the knowledge of Arabic and ultimately of Greek science spread were from Sicily and Spain. The other translators from Arabic and directly from Greek were Michael Scott, Plato of Tivoli, Gurgundio of Pisa, James of Venice, Eugino of Palermo, William Moerbeke, etc.

With the revival of learning Paris University opened in A.D. 1170 followed by Oxford University. They became great centres of learning. Oxford produced two great scientific men: Robert Grosseteste (1168-1259) and his pupil Roger Bacon (1214-1292). By the thirteenth and

fourteenth centuries the footsteps of Renaissance was heard in Europe. We have during the period Alighieri Dante, Petrarch, the founder of humanism and the writer Boccaccio.

Arabs learned paper-making from the Chinese in A.D. 751. Paper was a growing need in the Islamic universities and libraries. Between 1347-1402 black plague ravaged Europe. The population of Europe became half. There was a great dearth of craftsmen. Perhaps, this created a need of automated writing. In 1457 Gutenberg discovered movable types and brought in a revolution in printing. In 1457 there was only one printing press in the city of Mainz. Within 23 years, by 1480, there were printing presses in 110 towns of Europe. Printing revolutionized knowledge. The knowledge which was limited to few became available to many. Knowledge became democratized.

#### RENAISSANCE

In 1453 Constantinople had fallen to Ottoman Turks. The Greek scholars took shelter mainly in the Italian cities and carried along with them valuable manuscripts. By 1515 when Aldus Manutius died all major Greek works were published. This revival of learning and rediscovery of the thoughts of ancient Greeks, Arabs, and the East laid the foundation of High Renaissance in Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The spirit of the Renaissance was self-expression, humanism, and breaking the paradigm of authority and tradition. There was a great efflorescence of culture in Europe. We had Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael in Italy, Albrecht Dürer in Germany, Erasmus in Holland, Cervantes in Spain, and to climax it all Shakespeare in England. Man became the measure of all things. This revival of whatever is human finds expression in



those wonderful lines of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*:

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!

When Michelangelo paints the Creation of Adam on the vaults of Sistine Chapel God appears in masculine human form, not with the halo of supernatural brilliance. The Renaissance spirit engulfed all parts of Europe like a surging volcano.

#### EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERIES

When Constantinople had fallen to the Turks in 1453 the Europeans needed an alternate trade route to the East. Hence started the exploration and discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Already, in the thirteenth century Marco Polo had travelled to China from Venice and from his writings Europe had learnt about the rich cities of China, the golden towers of Japan, the pagodas of Burma and Thailand, and the spices of the East Indies and the luxuries of India. For about hundred years different European explorers like Bartholomew Diaz, Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, Magellan, and Vasco da Gama discovered various parts of the uncharted world. Wherever the explorers went they took the flag of glory and god but brought back gold. Columbus, very clearly, explained the aims of exploration. He said, 'Gold is the most precious of all objects in this world, as also the means of rescuing their souls from the purgatory and restoring them to the enjoyment of paradise.' The ultimate effects of exploration and discoveries were:

- a. Formation of colonies and plunder
- b. Slave trade from Africa

- c. Rise and growth of nation states in Europe

Vasco da Gama reached Calicut in A.D. 1498. He bought cargo of spices 60 times the cost of the trip. With the growth of trade and commerce the foreign trade in Europe doubled in the decade between 1731 and 1740 when compared to the decade between 1701 and 1710. It doubled again between 1761 and 1770.

#### PROTESTANT REFORMATION

With the advent of the footsteps of Renaissance in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries attacks on papal authority started appearing in England and France which later spread to other parts of Europe. John Wycliffe of England translated Bible into English in the fourteenth century. It was a great heretical act, because at that time Bible was only available in Latin which was the language of the church. John Huss (1369-1415), pupil of Wycliffe's writings, a professor of Prague, was burnt to death for his heretical views. Erasmus, a Renaissance scholar of Holland, severely criticized the excesses of church and the clergy through his writings. In 1517 Martin Luther registered his protest against selling of 'Letter of Indulgences' for building St. Peter's church in Rome. The rich, poor, nobles, and merchants rallied behind Luther. The reasons for the protests against the church were:

- a. Accumulation of fabulous wealth by church. Pope and higher clergies started living lives of luxuries.
- b. Violation of Christian norms of virtues by the clergies.
- c. Churches became a financial burden to the state.

Within the seventeenth century half of Europe became Protestant. Protestant Reformation helped in the secularization of society.



## SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION BETWEEN THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

Printing Revolution and Renaissance opened up the spirit of man in Europe. Men started looking at nature and nature's processes and recording the same. Important scientific observations were made by Renaissance personalities like Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Duerer.

In botany Otto Brunfels, Jerome Boek, Leonard Fuchs, collectively known as the 'German Fathers of Botany', made important observations of plant world and wrote books on botany. In zoology, Pierre Belon, Guillaume Rondelet, and Konrad Gesner, the three 'Encyclopaedic Naturalists', were the most notable men. In chemistry Paracelsus, the father of Western Chemistry, contributed towards the theory of disease. He was the first in the West to construct a complete system of chemistry. Biringuccio, Ercker, and Agricola wrote books on mining and metallurgy. William Gilbert of England wrote his famous work *De Magnete*. Spectacles started being used from the sixteenth century in Europe. This stimulated study in optics. The Arab scientist al Haitham's work on optics was translated in Latin and printed in 1572. Pioneering works on optics were done by John Pecham and Witelo. The first printed edition of Euclid's *Element* appeared in Italy in 1482. This work stimulated studies in perspective, geometry, and map-making. Famous painters like Brunelleschi, Uccello, Piero de la Francesca, da Vinci, and Duerer did work on perspective. Gerhard Mercator, the Flemish cartographer, developed cylindrical projection. Georg Peurbach and Johannes Mueller (Regiomantus) did work on trigonometry. In Italy between 1472 and 1500 no less than 214 mathematical books have been published to feed the increasing demands from banking houses, merchants,

workshops, public administrators, astrologers, and scholars. In medicine Andreas Vesalius published his *Fabric of Human Body*, perhaps the greatest scientific work ever written. In astronomy the most revolutionary ideas came from Nicholas of Cusa, Johannes Mueller (Regiomantus), and finally from Nicholas Copernicus. In Europe, the two books which changed man's view of the physical world during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were *The Fabric of Universe* by Vesalius and *De Revolutionibus Coelestium Orbium* by Copernicus. The time was ripe for the birth of Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) who brought the modern world into being by turning his telescope towards the sky. Galileo bridged the sixteenth century with the seventeenth. Seventeenth century saw the culmination of the Scientific Revolution of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the seventeenth century we have Robert Boyle (1627-91), the father of modern chemistry, Marcello Malpighi (1628-94), the father of microscopy, John Ray (1628-1705), Christian Huygens (1629-95), Antonius Leeuwenhoek (1632-1727), Robert Hook (1635-1703), Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716), and to climax it all the birth of great Newton (1642-1729) in the year Galileo died. As if the mantle of science was passed from Galileo to Newton.

## SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES

Post-Renaissance period was a new age when the human spirit was striving to break the fetters of authority and tradition. New institutions were needed to foster this new spirit. Francis Bacon, a great Renaissance personality, dreamt of such an institution in his book *New Atlantis* written in 1625. Scientific Societies started appearing in Europe from the beginning of the seventeenth century in



response to this need of the new age. In 1601 Academi dei Lincei was founded in Italy of which Galelio was a member. In 1657 Academy of Experiment was started in Florence of which Torecelli and Vinani, the students of Galelio, were members. Royal Society in England was founded in 1660 by the informal adherents of Francis Bacon's experimental philosophy. Newton was its President from 1707 to 1729. French Academy des Sciences was established in Paris in 1666 by Descarte and Pascal. Leibniz took the initiative to start the Berlin Academy in 1700. Hence by the beginning of the eighteenth century Scientific Societies appeared in different parts of Europe to foster this new spirit of scientific enquiry.

#### AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The Renaissance had inaugurated an era of questioning the established beliefs. Gradually this questioning covered every aspect of human thought. Advances in sciences also undermined the existing beliefs. In 1620s an outlook called Deism started in England which believed in 'national religion'. Edward Herbert, a metaphysical poet, philosopher, diplomat, and historian, wrote 'On truth', which claimed that 'instructed reason' was a better guide to truth. Deism flourished more strongly in France where its advocates were persons like Voltaire and Rousseau. Voltaire, who was already committed to anti-Christian rationalism, expressed Deist ideas in his book *Philosophical Letters* written in 1728. Jean Jacques Rousseau supported Deism in his books *Emile* and *The Social Contract*. The 'Age of Deism' ended with the appearance of 'Age of Reason' by Thomas Paine languishing in prison under Robespierre. Age of Reason and Enlightenment started in France in the eighteenth century

which looked on the world with a new rationalism that to a greater or lesser extent severed any connection between the natural world and God's continuing concern with it. Francis Bacon ushered in the era of experimental philosophy. Bacon advocated a study of nature based upon observation and induction and directed towards harnessing it for human purposes. Newton's *Principia* had already established a mechanistic-deterministic view of the universe. It did not reject god, who perhaps created the universe, but the universe once created must obey laws of natural behaviour. Miracles became unbelievable, biblical prophecy unacceptable. John Locke in his book *An Essay on Human Understanding* published in 1690 suggested that man's cognition arises out of his experience from environment. According to him there is no innate idea, there is no divine inspiration. It is the environment that makes a man what he is. Another outlook analogous to Deism called Scepticism started in France in 1697 when Pierre Bayle published his *Historical and Critical Dictionary* which aimed at demolishing the 'vices of religion'. A totally materialistic attitude was also expressed when Philosopher Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert, the mathematician and secretary of French Academy of Sciences, edited the famous 33-volume *Encyclopaedia or Classified Dictionary of Sciences, Arts and Trades*, between 1751 and 1777, which is a compendium of the new rationalistic thinking containing severe criticism of religion and the establishment. The late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were therefore times of philosophical changes, alteration in man's outlook about himself, and an attack on what had for long been the cherished beliefs of western Christendom.

(To be concluded)



DEBIPRASAD BHATTACHARYYA, M.A.

Mr Debiprasad Bhattacharyya's lectures on the above subject are continued from the previous issue and concluded here.

THERE IS one important *Vedānta-Sūtra* (IV.1.3) which speaks about the highest form of Vedāntic *upāsana*, and thus throws much light on the nature of the higher *bhakti*. The *sūtra* reads: *Ātmeti tūpagacchanti grāhayanti ca*. Referring obviously to two *śrūtis* from the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, it says that the *upāsaka* should meditate on Brahman as his own Self—Ātman. The two *śrūtis* are: 'I am Brahman'—*Ahaṁ brahmāsmi* (B.U. I.4.10.) and again, 'He (Brahman) is your own Self'—*Esa ta ātmā* (B.U. III.7.23). This *sūtra* is very important from our point of view because it brings out the very essence of *parā bhakti*. Nothing is dearer and nearer to a person than his own Self; so when the *bhakta* feels that Brahman is no other than his own Self his *bhakti* becomes infinitely more profound and intense than ordinary *bhakti* on a dualistic plane. This is why I said earlier that *parā bhakti* makes its appearance only on the plane of Advaita.

## V

The term '*bhakti*' itself does not occur in the *Brahma-Sūtra*; nor is it to be found in any of the older *Upaniṣads*, except once, and only once, at the end of *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, which is, by all accounts, not one of the oldest. I shall turn to the *Upaniṣads* at the end; before I do that I would like to quote and discuss in particular a *Vedānta-Sūtra*

which has, from our point of view, a central importance. It is *Brahma-Sūtra*, III.2.24. The immediate context of this *sūtra* is given in the two preceding ones. *Sūtra*, III.2.22, explains the famous '*neti neti*' of *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, which means 'Not this, not this'. According to the great *sūtrakāra*—Bādarāyaṇa, it means that Brahman is not exhausted by his gross and subtle forms—*mūrtāmūrta*; He has also a transcendent existence in which He is beyond both. *Sūtra*, III.2.23, says that as such Brahman is *avyakta*—unmanifest, and thus beyond the senses, for there are *śrūtis* to this effect; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (III.1.8.) declares, for instance, that Brahman cannot be grasped by our eyes, nor through our speech: *na cakṣuṣā grhyate nāpi vācā*.

Then comes our *sūtra* (III.2.24.) which runs: *Api samrādhane pratyakṣānumānābhyām*. And yet Brahman is revealed in devoted meditation, according to *śruti* (*pratyakṣa*) and *smṛti* (*anumāna*). '*Api*', the first word in this *sūtra*, has the sense of '*tu*', meaning 'yet', 'nevertheless'. The point is that though Brahman in His ultra-cosmic transcendence is utterly beyond our mind and senses (*avyakta*), He can be apprehended through '*samrādhana*'. Radhakrishnan renders '*samrādhana*' as '*perfect meditation*'. The term *samrādhana* means much the same thing as our more familiar '*ārādhana*' or '*ārādhana*', which, again, is very close



to Vedāntic, that is, Upaniṣadic '*upāsana*' or '*upāsana*'. Radhakrishnan has, however, a very good warrant for translating it as 'meditation'—*dhyāna*, for the *śruti* which most commentators quote as the one pointed to in the *sūtra* actually contains the term '*dhyāyamāna*', meaning 'engaged in meditation'. This *śruti* is from the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (III. 1.8.): *Jñānaprasāde-na viśuddhasattvas tatasu tam paśyate niṣkalam dhyāyamānaḥ*. Only when the inner being is purified by a glad serenity of knowledge, then indeed, meditating, one beholds the Spirit indivisible. (Sri Aurobindo) It is interesting to note here that the *dhyāna*—meditation—that leads to the supreme vision takes place in a pure soul that is filled with *prasāda*; the state of the soul described here has a remarkably close and beautiful correspondence with that of the '*brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā*' of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*; the '*dhyāna*' mentioned here may, therefore, very well be taken to correspond to that spontaneous, intense, and concentrated movement of the soul towards the Absolute—Aksara—called '*parā bhakti*' in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

But '*dhyāna*' cannot be the whole meaning of '*saṁrādhana*', which signifies not merely a process but also an attitude, an attitude towards the Divine. This attitude is *bhakti*. That this is so is clearly and significantly borne out by the fact that a good many among the great Vedāntic commentators in explaining the term *saṁrādhana* mention *bhakti* along with *dhyāna*. Nimbārka, for instance, says in his succinct commentary: *Bhaktiyoge dhyāne tu vyajyate brahma*—'Brahman is revealed in *bhaktiyoga* and *dhyāna* (meditation)'. Rāmānuja writes: *Samrādhane —Samyakprīṇane bhaktirūpāpanne nidi-dhyāsane evāśya sāksātkāraḥ*—'Brahman is directly apprehended in meditation that has assumed the form of love and adoration'. Ācārya Śaṅkara, again, defines

*saṁrādhana* as '*bhaktidhyana—praṇidhānā-dyanuṣṭhānam*'—*saṁrādhana* is the practice of *bhakti*, *dhyāna*, and *praṇidhāna*. This last term, *praṇidhāna*, may mean either surrender or concentration.

All the three commentators are agreed therefore that *bhakti* and *dhyāna* together constitute *saṁrādhana*. And this is clearly confirmed by the reference in the *sūtra* to *smṛti*; for here, all the commentators without exception quote as *smṛtipramāṇa* the identical verse from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*—the 54th *śloka* of chapter XI:

*Bhaktiā tvananyayā śakya ahamevarivido'ṛjuna;*

*Jñātum draṣṭum ca tattvena praveṣṭum ca paramtapa.*

But by unswerving devotion to Me, O Arjuna, I can be thus known, truly seen and entered into, O Oppressor of the foe (Arjuna). (Radhakrishnan)

## VI

The term '*bhakti*' occurs, as has already been noted, only once in the older and universal *Upaniṣads*—in the very last verse of the great *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*. I must quote now this long-awaited and deservedly celebrated *śloka*:

*Yasya deve parā bhaktiḥ yathā deve tathā gurau.*

*Tasyaite kathitā hyarthaḥ prakāśante mahātmānaḥ, prakāśante mahātmānaḥ.*

These matters which are spoken of here are truly revealed only to those great-souled beings who feel the highest *bhakti* towards the Divine, and also and as much, towards the *guru*. (Incidentally, there occurs in this very verse another term which is rarely to be found in the older *Upaniṣads*—'*guru*': it is almost as rare indeed as '*bhakti*', and as important.)

Now, the mental or psychic process which corresponds to '*bhakti*' is '*bhajana*'.



which comes from the same verbal root—'bhaj': *bhaj* + *kti* = *bhakti*; *bhaj* + *ana* (*lyut*) = *bhajana*. The meaning of this latter, *bhajana*, is much the same as 'ārādhana' and 'upāsana'. Now, this 'upāsana' or 'upāsana' and its various verbal forms are among the most widely used expressions in the older *Upaniṣads*. The verb *upās* (*upa* + *ās*) means to worship, to adore, to meditate; very often it has the sense of all three combined. Expressions like 'upāste', 'upāsate', or 'upāsīta' are to be come across everywhere in the *Upaniṣads*—a fact which shows, clearly and indisputably, that the central Vedāntic *sādhana* or spiritual exercise is *upāsana*; in a slightly different form—*upāsā*, we have already met with it in *Brahma-Sūtra*, I.1.32, which with its mention of the great threefold worship or meditation gives us the key to Vedāntic *sādhana*.

This *upāsana* or *upāsana*, then, is the ancient Vedic expression for the later, and, for us, more familiar expressions like *bhajana*, *pūjana*, and *ārādhana*, all of which signify the same thing. (Incidentally, all these terms find their way into a single line of one of the songs of *Gītāñjali*: '*bhajan pūjan sādhan ārādhanā*'.) And this old Vedic expression never lost currency; it continued to be used, and widely used, in later scriptural texts. The verbal form in the plural—*upāsate* is used, for instance, no less than five times in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (IX.14, IX.15, XII.2, XII.6, XIII.25). Of these five, one, namely XII.6, deserves to be quoted here for a special reason. It runs thus: *Ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi sarṇyasya matparāḥ; Ananyenaiva yogena mām dhyāyanta upāsate*. But those, who, laying all their actions on Me, intent on Me, worship, meditating on Me, with unswerving devotion. (Radhakrishnan)

What deserves to be noted carefully here is the juxtaposition of the two verbs: *mām dhyāyanta upāsate*—worship Me,

meditating. The main verb here is 'upāsate'—(they) worship, which takes the form of meditation (*dhyāna*). *Upāsana*, therefore, includes *dhyāna*; which shows that it is a wider, more comprehensive concept than *dhyāna*. This being so, *upāsana* must be regarded as something more than *dhyāna*; it is in fact closer to what later came to be called '*bhajana*', which, as we noted a moment ago, is *bhakti* in action; so is its Vedic and Vedāntic forerunner—*upāsana*.

Though not so common, there is another term found in the *Upaniṣads* which is very close to *bhakti*: it is '*juṣṭa*', an adjective derived from the verb '*juṣ*' which means worship, adore, serve. In an earlier passage we had quoted the famous stanza about the two birds—*Dvā suparnā*. Let me quote now the stanza which follows:

*Samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno'-  
nīsayā śocatī muhyamānaḥ;  
Juṣṭam yadā paśyatyanyamīśam-  
asya mahimānamiti vītaśokaḥ*

(*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, III.1.2).

The soul is the bird that sits immersed on the one common tree; but because he is not lord he is bewildered and has sorrow. But when he sees that other who is the Lord and beloved, he knows that all is his greatness and his sorrow passes away from him.

The translation is Sri Aurobindo's, who renders *juṣṭa* as beloved; a closer rendering would be 'worshipped', 'adored'. It is clearly a picture of *bhakti* leading to the supreme beatific vision resulting in final deliverance—*mokṣa*. There is another thing in this memorable picture which brings out clearly an aspect of *bhakti* which has a central importance in Vaisnavism; it is the intense and profound sense of the utter helplessness and powerlessness of the *Jīva*, *baddha* *Jīva*, contemplating the omnipotent *Īśvara*, the eternally free and blissful absolute



Lord of the Universe who, when meditated on with love and adoration, liberates the Jiva from the vicissitudes of this changing world, *saṁsāra*, through His infinite grace.

And this supremely important matter of grace, Divine grace, again, comes out clearly in those haunting lines of the *Kāthopaniṣad* which are so often quoted:

*Nāyamātmā pravācanena labhyo  
na medhayā na bahunā śruteṇa;  
Yamevaiṣa vṛnute tena labhyas  
tasyaiṣa ātmā vṛnute tanūm svām*

(K.U. I.2.23; M.U. III.2.3).

The Self is not to be won by eloquent teaching, nor by brain power, nor by much learning: but only he whom this Being chooses can win Him; for to him this Self bares His body. (Sri Aurobindo's translation)

I quote this celebrated Vedāntic *locus classicus* on Divine grace or *kṛpā* because this idea of *kṛpā* is indissolubly bound up with that of *bhakti*, for to the *bhakta*, God, in the Indian tradition, is not only all-powerful, He is also all love and tenderness. How could it be otherwise when the Jivas in the Vedāntic vision are He Himself enjoying in its infinite variety the world (*jagat*) He has created, that is, manifested within Himself?

One last point remains, which is of the very greatest importance from our point of view. We have found, in the profuse and recurrent mention of *upāsana*, abundant evidence of *bhakti* in action. I have called *upāsana*, *bhakti* in action—*bhājana*, which is a process rather than a state; *bhakti*, however, is not a process, as has been noted earlier, but a state of mind, an attitude. The question now is: Is there anywhere in the *Upaniṣads* anything which suggests this attitude or state of mind that we call *bhakti*?

The answer is yes. There is a passage in the great *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* which gives us, in lines of astonishing poetic

charm, the quintessence of *bhakti*. I quote:

*Dhanurgrhīṭva upaniṣadam mahāstram  
śaram hyupāsāniṣitam sandhayita;  
Āyamyā tadbhāvagatena cetasā*

*lakṣyam tadevākṣaram saumya viddhi*  
(M.U. II.2.3).

Take up the bow of the upaniṣadic mantra, that mighty weapon, set to it an arrow sharpened by adoration, draw the bow with a heart wholly devoted to the contemplation of That, and O fair son, penetrate into that as thy target, even into the Immutable (akṣara). (Sri Aurobindo) *Āyamyā tadbhāvagatena cetasā*—drawing the bow with a heart wholly devoted to the contemplation of That—that is surely the purest essence, the very consummation of *bhakti*, if anything is. It is the state of the *bhakta* described in the *Gītā* who thinks of nothing else. '*Ananyacetāḥ satatam yo mām smarati nityaśah*'—He who constantly meditates on 'Me,' says the Lord, 'thinking of nothing else (*ananyacetāḥ*).' VIII.14.

The idea of this great *śloka* of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* is continued and clarified in the next, which I now quote:

*Prapavo dhanuḥ śaro hyātmā brahma  
tallakṣyamucyate;  
Apramattena veddhavyam śaravat tanmayo  
bhavet* (M.U. II.2.4).

Om is the bow and the soul is the arrow, and That, even the Brahman, is spoken of as the target. That must be pierced with an unflinching aim; one must be absorbed into That as an arrow is lost in its target. (Sri Aurobindo)

'*Śaravat tanmayo bhavet*'—be absorbed into That as an arrow is lost in its target. This is the height of *bhakti*—*parā-bhakti*; and the target of this is not *Saguṇa* Brahman or *Īśvara*, but, as the *śruti* here makes it perfectly clear, Brahman as *Akṣara*, the all-comprehending yet all-transcending divine Ground of all Being.



## SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN THE EYES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

GARGI SAMADDAR

*Miss Gargi Samaddar is a student of M.A. (English) [First Year], University of Calcutta. She won the first prize in the Institute's All-India Elocution Competition for Students on Swami Vivekananda for 1990 in the post-graduate group. The following is her prize-winning elocution-speech:*

TODAY, THE word 'religion' is often looked down upon in contempt and the 'religious' man is often the object of ridicule for the educated. This stems from a certain amount of ambiguity associated with the word 'religion'. To most men religion is, 'if not asked I know, if asked I know not.' It is a medley of rituals and ceremonies; it consists in following certain mechanical gestures, the meaning of which we do not understand. And above all, it is something airy, nebulous, and almost intangible for the common man, something which is to be awed and dreaded.

Science, on the contrary, is looked upon as a product of an ultra-modern age. It is hostile to religion and completely different, because it deals with the material world.

'Art, science, and religion are but three different ways of expressing a single truth,' said Swami Vivekananda. So science and religion are two aspects or two phases of expressing the greatest truths of life. The multifarious problems of life have raised questions in the minds of scientists and philosophers of the past and only after a process of deep contemplation or meditation, they have drawn certain

conclusions and used their ideas to help mankind because of their firm belief that these will bring peace to man.

What then exactly are science and religion? For a more comprehensive understanding, we have to turn to Swamiji [Swami Vivekananda] for an answer.

Both religion and science help in the upliftment of man—morally and materially. According to Swamiji, 'Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man.' And science is indispensable—without science man would be unable to survive.

In his conception of religion, Swamiji very rightly stressed the concept of selfless service. Forget yourself and serve others, not with pity but with love. The tremendous importance of science he stresses repeatedly to his disciples. With the help of Western scientific technology and medical science, man can render tremendous service to man. If we analyse, we will find that all the branches of science are only for rendering service to man. But, on Christianity's attitude to the great scientists such as Pasteur and Koch, Swamiji says, 'If Christianity had its old paramount sway in Europe today, it would



have lighted the fire of the Inquisition against such modern scientists as Pasteur and Koch, and burnt Darwin and others of his school at the stake.'

To Swamiji, the secret of religion lies not in theories but in practice. The rituals of religion were never important to him. He firmly believed that one could understand the *Gita* much more through playing football and by developing iron muscles and nerves than by studying it. There is an extreme practicality in this point of view. And practicality is another aspect of scientific attitude. Science deals with the truths of the material world. In order to satisfy our material wants, the study of science is indispensable. Unless our physical needs are satisfied, we will not be able to survive as human beings. Where will then be the opportunity for higher thoughts?

Swamiji wants us to be brave, moral, to be heartwhole men. 'Be good and do good to others'—that is the secret of religion. A deep understanding of religion trains the heart, while a thorough study of science trains the intellect and brain. The study of science teaches man to think rationally, it awakens his analytical powers, because science raises the question why. And Swamiji was the most scientific man of his age. He never accepted anybody's words or anything as Gospel truth. He argued with his guru, questioned the scriptures, and even criticized our past philosophers such as Buddha and Sankaracharya. We are all aware of the hookah episode where we see that even as a child, Swamiji was experimenting

to find out how one might lose one's caste by smoking the hookahs kept for the members of different castes.\*

In Vedanta, we believe that the diversities in the universe are all different manifestations of the Divine. Western scientists too find this unity in diversity in different ways. By breaking up matter into protons, electrons, and neutrons, they find energy. And what is God in religion? A source of energy. And energy, like God, can neither be created nor be destroyed. It can only change its form from one shape to another. While we name the various forms of energy by the names of Gods and Goddesses, the Western scientists refer to them as Kinetic, Solar, Potential, Heat Energy, etc. And after one point, scientists such as Einstein are unable to find the answer to some questions. It is at this point that religion comes in. Religion deals with supersensuous truths whereas science is a more concrete, material understanding of life.

Although Swamiji apparently is a man of religion, he is in fact rather a scientific man. His thinking was very rational and scientific and always for improving the lot of man. He spoke of 'Practical Vedanta'. It sounds rather extraordinarily contradictory. Vedanta is associated with 'religion', our tradition; and then there is this sudden juxtaposition of a very ordinary word 'practical', suggesting something down-to-earth and our day-to-day living. That was what Swamiji was—the personification, the blend, the perfect combination of the Western and the Eastern sciences or Western science and Eastern religion.

\*They [his father's clients] were of various castes; ... and each was provided with his own hookah. Caste was a mystery to the boy. Why should not a member of one caste eat with a member of another or smoke his hookah? What would happen if one did? Would the roof fall in on him? Would he suddenly die? He decided to see for himself. Boldly he went round the hookahs and took a whiff from each and every one. No, he was not dead! (The Life of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I, Mayavati, 1979, p. 23.)



## TALKS AND DISCOURSES

### God the Magnet and Devotee the Needle

Music is the language of the soul. The Mother would often say that Sri Ramakrishna would float on the ocean of devotional songs. He would have transports of ecstasy by 'concord of sweet notes'.

In his homespun parables, the Master would refer to two categories of devotees—the kitten and the baby-monkey. The kitten has no will of its own. It is happy that its mother is around to look after its well-being. It does not care if its mother would seize it by the neck and place it on the three-tier soft bed of the zemindar or would carry it to an ash-heap. The surrender of the kitten is total. A category of devotees would place themselves at the disposal of the divine Mother, come good or ill. Sri Ramakrishna had his Mother at his beck and call. A baby-monkey would make its own exertions and firmly hold on to its mother's body. The monkey type of aspirants would go through spiritual disciplines, practise austerities as prescribed by the scriptures or the guru. The kitten type of devotees cry for help when in difficulty and God responds and materializes before them.

In the *Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says,

Quickly I come  
To those who offer me  
Every action,  
Worship me only,  
Their dearest delight,  
With devotion undaunted.

Because they love me  
These are my bondsmen  
And I shall save them  
From mortal sorrow

And all the waves

Of life's deathly ocean.

The idea of complete surrender to God's will is further elaborated by Sri Ramakrishna: While going over the dikes, there is no scope for a fall if the father holds fast the body of his son. The son dozes off to sleep in the complete faith that his father would protect him from all mishap.

God says that He is '*bhaktaparādhīno hyasvatanīra*'—that He is not different from His devotee—He is tied down by the love of His devotee.

The relationship between God and devotee is that of the magnet and the needle. In the beginning, God is the magnet drawing to Him His devotee but as the bondage between the devotee and his Lord matures and grows firm, the relationship is reversed—God then becomes the needle and the devotee the magnet. God cannot live without His devotee—the identity between man and his creator is firmly established—God is man and man is God. 'It is as though God, in His infinite mercy had come to our normal mind to be known and perceived by it.'

Buddha offered himself to save a kid which was being led to the sacrificial ground by the priests. Rāmānuja would gladly cede his immortality if that could earn liberation for a mortal being.

'It must be remembered that Ramakrishna himself often strove against his ecstatic leanings, which prevented him from giving adequate help to others. One of his prayers was: "Let me be born again and again, even in the form of a dog, if so I can be of use to one single soul."'

\*Based on discourses by Swami Lokeshwarananda on *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta* in May 1991.



### 'That Brahman Thou Art'

A man, a juggler puts on a mask of a tiger or a monkey. Little children would shriek in fear. To them the animals are very much real. The mask completely hides the man behind it. But older people would enjoy the fun and clap their hands in appreciation. They know the tiger or the monkey has only an illusory existence. They can see through the illusion created by the juggler. The masks are attributes superimposed by the man.

The Vedāntist asserts that God is the creator, the material cause of the objective world. The universe is peopled with an infinite number of souls, who are sparks from the blazing fire that is God. It is man's self-hypnotism that is at the base of the delusion that the material universe is real and distinct from its creator. Vivekananda says that we men are like visitors to a picture-gallery—curious, wide-eyed, and excited at the variety and grandeur of the exhibits of the Master Artist. He observes, 'He is all. He—She—the Mother, is playing, and we are like dolls, Her helpers in this play. Here, She puts one now in the garb of a beggar, another moment in the garb of a king, the next moment in the garb of a saint, and again in the garb of a devil. We are putting on different garbs to help the Mother Spirit in Her play.' We are all actors doing our appointed parts on the stage but Mother who has the pivotal role in the drama is behind the screen and beyond view.

In eleven verses, Ācārya Śaṅkara urges the aspirant after the Ultimate Truth to meditate on '*Brahma tattvamasi*' ('that Brahman thou art'). The basic tenet of Vedānta is the glorious proclamation that Jīva is Brahman, no less and none else.

This sacred statement is confirmed by the *guru*, the illumined soul and reinforced by the scriptures. A purified intellect is firmly rooted in the conviction that the world of plurality is born in *Avidyā* or ignorance. The world is always changing, constantly unstable. Brahman is the ocean of Infinite Consciousness and Jīvaṣ are waves on it, big or small, popping up one moment on the surface of the ocean and then disappearing the next moment.

There are six sorrows humans are subject to: (i) hunger, (ii) thirst, (iii) revulsion for objects producing sorrow, (iv) attachment to pleasurable things, (v) senility, and (vi) death. These have been designated as six waves (*ṣaḍ-ūrmi*) on the ocean of existence. They are enemies too which cannot be conquered unless illumination is achieved through meditation on the fundamental, divine essence of man, the Jīva. Man is synonymous with the Ultimate Reality Brahman. Through sustained contemplation and discipline, the yogi transcends all limitations of mind and body. He then arrives at the conviction which is as authentic and as infallible as that of a man who holds in the hollow of his palm a quantity of water. He then declares, 'I am He and He is I. None but I was God, and this little I never existed.' It is a Sisyphean task for a puny mortal to realize that Jīva is Śiva, not a clod of earth, ephemeral and perishable, who 'struts and frets his hour upon the stage' of life for a space of time, is snuffed out into oblivion and heard of no more. In the Old Testament we have it that God created man 'of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life'. But the Advaitist would not toe this line of thought. To him the whole of existence is Saccidānanda in multiform.\*

\*Based on discourses by Swami Lokeshwarananda on *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* in May 1991.



## Sport with the Self

Sport with the Self—that is the divine mandate of the scriptures and the illumined souls. Through his sense-organs the ignorant person seeks pleasure from the material universe and these pleasures are ephemeral, transient, and perishable. The Self is the only Reality. It is One Existence, Infinite, beyond body and mind and intellect. The Self cannot be defined or predicated like space. 'No intellectual apprehension of the Self is possible. The universe with multiple names and forms, limitless diversity is a figment of man's imagination. It is a creation of his mind. The Self is all-pervasive—both inside and outside. To explain this idea Sri Ramakrishna would say that a pitcher dipped in water has water both inside and outside, as space encompasses the entire physical universe. The veil of ignorance hides the Reality. Illusion creates the barriers between man and man, between you and me, the embodied selves of the One and the same Self. Sri Ramakrishna would bow his head to devotees of all religious denominations because in the last analysis, they were reflections of the divine essence, manifestations of God. When one has a firm grip of this fundamental truth, the sense of separateness ceases to exist. Everything merges into the ocean of One Existence. Vivekananda exhorts all to kill out the differentiation that through ignorance man sets up between one being and another. The senses create matter. They cannot reach up to the spirit which is God. When a man attains Self-Knowledge, he becomes sovereign, independent of all limitations. He is no more a vassal but *sva-rāt*, the supreme ruler. He is luminous with the knowledge of the Self.

The treasure of gold is hidden under the surface of the soil. People walk over it again and again. They do not find it because of the covering of the earth. Truth remains hidden from us because of the existence of the covering of untruth. The Brahma-Loka is inside our heart. Slaves as we are to the sense-pleasures of our physical existence, we do not explore the treasure that is hidden in the cave of our hearts.

Man has communion with Brahman, the Self, during his deep sleep. The man of God has blissful awareness of being in union with Brahman. But the ignorant man is denied this awareness. As a result, when death seizes both the knower of Brahman and the ignorant man and though both of them are united with the Ātman, the realized soul attains immortality. The man with insatiated worldly desires comes back to the mundane world for another round of birth and death with concomitant sorrows and sufferings that a mortal is heir to. But some of these liberated souls would of their own free will forgo their own personal liberation, be born again till the whole of humanity is liberated. They are Bodhisattvas—suffering pain and sorrows like other mortals by own choice. They suffer so that others may not suffer, they die on the cross so that others may live. The mystic lyricist of Bengal, Rāmaprasāda, the Divine Mother's darling, would urge us all to look inside to find the treasures in the lotus of our hearts, the holy of holies. The physical world is an emanation from Brahman. The Upaniṣads emphasizing the monistic view of One Existence would warn against seeking distinctions between one self and another. The One appears fragmented because of ignorance.\*

\*Based on discourses (Tarapada Chaudhuri Lectures) by Swami Lokeswarananda on the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* in May 1991.



### Why Did Aspirants of Different Denominations Come to the Master?

On account of their contact with Sri Ramakrishna, the monks and spiritual aspirants who came to Dakshineswar received a new illumination and direction in their spiritual life. Having thus reached the fulfilment of their own spiritual life, they got the opportunity of showing the true aspirants of their denominations thirsting for spirituality, how to realize God along their own paths. Every one of them came only to learn, and having perfected his knowledge, went away to his own place. Although the Bhairavi Brahmani, Tota Puri, and some others were very fortunate in coming and helping the Master [Sri Ramakrishna] in his spiritual life, they too were blessed to realize, by the power of Divine grace bestowed on them through the personality of the Master, those hidden spiritual truths which they were unable to experience in their own lives in spite of their lifelong *sādhana*s.

It does not take one long to understand another truth when one studies the order of the coming of those sadhus and *sādhakas* to the Master at Dakshineswar. Whenever he engaged himself in the discipline and worship of particular aspects of God and realized them, the true aspirants of those communities, devoted to those aspects of the Deity, would begin to pour in, in groups, for some time, and he would be spending days and nights in their company in discussion on the particular aspects of Divinity and philosophy they represented.

Obviously, there is a hidden meaning in the fact that the aspirants of different denominations came thus to Sri Ramakrishna. At the auspicious advent of the

incarnation of the age, it always happened thus in the world in the past and will happen so in the future. These incarnations are born in every age in order to avert the decline of religion and to brighten up the almost extinguished light of spirituality. Further, they keep intact the authenticity of the spiritual teachings of the preceding sages, teachers, and incarnations, instead of destroying them.

'When the flower blossoms, bees come.' The Master said many a time this was the law in the spiritual world also. It is according to this law that as soon as an incarnation of God gets illumination or realizes the truth of the spiritual world, those thirsting for religion are attracted to him in order to know and learn it. The reason why the aspirants of all denominations came to the Master, group after group, and not merely those of one denomination, is that, having traversed all denominational paths and having realized all the aspects of God realizable through them, he could give specific information about each of them. But all of these aspirants did not achieve perfection in the practice of their own doctrines nor could they recognize the Master as the 'Incarnation of the Age'. It was the best of them only who could do so. But each of them made progress along his own path by virtue of the divine company of the Master and was perfectly convinced that he would realize God at the right time if he went along his own path. It is superfluous to add that decline in religion arises through loss of faith in one's own path and in the possibility of realization through it among individuals, leading gradually to the spiritual barrenness of the whole community.\*

\*Based on discourses by Swami Rasajnananda on *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* in May 1991.



## Why Does Advaita Appeal to the Intellectuals?

As we have seen, as soon as the individual gives up maya, it vanishes for him and he becomes free. The whole struggle is to get rid of this clinging on to time, space, and causation, which are always obstacles in our way. How are we to conquer them? In answering the question we shall have recourse to the theory of evolution. We cannot possibly conquer *all* the objective environments. We cannot. The little fish wants to fly from its enemies in the water. How does it do so? By evolving wings and becoming a bird. The fish did not change the water or the air; the change was in itself. Change is always subjective. All through evolution you find that the conquest of nature comes by change in the subject. Apply this to religion and morality, and you will find that the conquest of evil comes by the change in the subjective alone. That is how the Advaita system gets its whole force, on the subjective side of man. The only religion which agrees with the principles of science and reason is the Advaita, and that is why it appeals to modern scientists so much. They find that the old dualistic theories are not enough for them.

However, even in India this Advaita was never allowed to come to the people. At first some monks got hold of it and took it to the forests, and so it came to be called the 'Forest Philosophy'. By the mercy of the Lord, the Buddha came and preached it to the masses, and the whole nation became Buddhists. Long after that, when the atheists and agnostics had destroyed the nation again, it was found out that Advaita was the only way to

save India from materialism.

Thus has Advaita twice saved India from materialism. Before the Buddha came, materialism had spread to a fearful extent, and it was of a most hideous kind, not like that of the present day, but of a far worse nature. The materialism that prevailed before Buddha was that crude sort of materialism which taught, 'Eat, drink, and be merry; there is no God, soul, or heaven; religion is a concoction of wicked priests.' It taught the morality that so long as you live, you must try to live happily; eat, though you have to borrow money for the food, and never mind about repaying it. That was the old materialism, and that kind of philosophy spread so much that even today it has got the name of 'popular philosophy'. Buddha brought the Vedanta to light, gave it to the people, and saved India. A thousand years after his death a similar state of things again prevailed. The mobs, the masses, and various races had been converted to Buddhism; naturally the teachings of the Buddha became in time degenerated, because most of the people were very ignorant. Again materialism came to the fore, taking the form of licence with the higher classes and superstition with the lower. Then Śaṅkarācārya arose and once more revived the Vedanta philosophy. He made it a rationalistic philosophy.

The salvation of Europe depends on a rationalistic religion, and Advaita—the non-duality, the Oneness, the idea of the Impersonal God—is the only religion that can have any hold on any intellectual people. It comes whenever religion seems to disappear and irreligion seems to prevail, and that is why it has taken ground in Europe and America.\*

\*Based on discourses by Swami Rasajnananda on Swami Vivekananda's *Jñāna-Yoga* in May 1991.



### The Way to Devotion (continued)

Ajāmila was freed from all his sins even by his unconscious utterance of the name Nārāyaṇa at the time of his death as he called out to his son, who was so named. The point which has been sought to be illustrated through this almost unbelievable story is this : we are all bound by *karmas* or actions of diverse nature, some of which are good and some bad and sometimes one predominates over the other. But the Self in its true nature is ever pure and unsullied by all these *karmas* and so all the bonds of *karma* drop off the very moment it is in touch with the core or essence of his own being. This touch is effected by the Divine Name, which takes him to *Vaikuṇṭha*, the region beyond all limitations (*kunṭhā*) of time and space and joins him with his true divine nature, which is beyond the purview of Yama, the controller of all that is in time. In a long harangue of thirteen verses, the messengers of Viṣṇu, the all-encompassing timeless reality, convince the messengers of Yama, the finite controller of time that Ajāmila, in spite of all his misdeeds, belongs to them alone and not to the latter because of his unconscious utterance of the Divine Name.

A question naturally arises in this connexion: if even the gravest sinner is purified just by a single utterance of the Divine Name, of what use then are all the different ways of purification prescribed in the scriptures, all of which are so difficult to be pursued in contrast with the easy utterance of the holy Name? The answer is provided here by Devahūti through a verse in which she extols the outcaste on whose lips rests His Name—*Yaj jihvāgre vartate nāma tubhyaṁ*, but

reminds in the very next line that only those noble souls who have performed sacrifices, undergone austerities, taken holy baths, and gone through the Vedas are privileged to utter this holy Name. In other words, in previous births they must have gone through all the processes of purification, though per chance through some grave misdeed they might have been born in such a low caste. A man should not be judged by his present life alone and the utterance of Divine Name is not an accidental affair but must have had the history of a long *sādhana* behind it.

Even Ajāmila himself surmised that though he was unfortunate (*durbhaga*) in every other way, he must have had some previous good fortune (*bhavitavyam maṅgalena*) for otherwise the utter disparity or total incongruity of the fact of a despicable man like him uttering the Divine Name could not be accounted for. Hence all pious acts must be pursued sincerely in order to cleanse the soul and make it fit to utter the Divine Name but at the same time it must be borne in mind that even all the pious acts may not be of any avail because they are performed or pursued by the ego-centred self. When the ego surrenders itself, being totally helpless after pursuing all his own efforts, only then he calls out to the Divine for His assistance. When that supreme moment will come in one's life and how the ego-self will be liquidated is beyond everybody's comprehension. After taking the full round of all his *karmas*, both good and bad, the self has to wait for the final hour of his release and it comes when he is in touch with the Divine Name, which is beyond all *karmas* and lifts him swiftly to *Vaikuṇṭha*, the unbounded sphere of utter freedom.\*

\*Based on discourses (R. K. Bhuwalka Lectures) by Dr Govinda Gopal Mukherjee on *Bhakti-ratnāvalī* in May 1991.



## Sāṃkhya Ontology

There are three kinds of realities according to Sāṃkhya—the evolved, the unevolved, and the pure subject. The evolved and the unevolved are material, while the pure subject, the knower, is pure consciousness. By realizing the ontological difference of pure consciousness from evolved and unevolved matter, that is, from the psychophysical complex, by attaining discriminative knowledge, one becomes liberated from all suffering for all time to come. For if anyone realizes that he is ontologically different from his body-mind complex, then suffering of the body and the mind cannot affect the pure consciousness which he really is. This is the only way to transcend the realm of sorrow and suffering, disease and death, permanently. Death is only of the body which is experienced as other than pure consciousness which is, therefore, not affected by bodily death. This discriminative knowledge is the most superior of the different means of terminating misery.

The three kinds of realities comprise 25 reals of different levels. (i) First there is the unevolved primordial matter, *prakṛti*; (ii) *buddhi* which is the substratum of ideas, images, etc. is the first evolute from *prakṛti*; (iii) from *buddhi* the ego (*ahamkāra*) is evolved; (iv) from the ego in one aspect (*sāttvika* aspect) are evolved *manas* and the 10 organs—5 sense-organs and 5 motor organs; (v) from the *tāmasika* aspect of the ego the 5 sensory qualities (*tanmātras*) evolve; (vi) from the *tanmātras*, the 5 gross elements (*pañca-mahābhūtas*) evolve. Completely different from all these is the *puruṣa*, the pure consciousness. These are the 25 reals of different levels.

These 25 reals are divided into 4

classes. (i) Those which, though themselves not produced, yet bring others into existence; there is only one member of this class, namely, the primordial matter which is *prakṛti* and not a *vikṛti* (not produced). (ii) Then there is the class of 7 reals which are evolved from some reals, and also produce other reals. They are (a) *buddhi* which is produced by *prakṛti*, and produces the ego (*ahamkāra*); (b) *ahamkāra* is thus produced, and produces in one aspect 11 organs, *manas*, 5 sense-organs, and 5 motor organs, these 11 reals do not produce anything; (c) *ahamkāra* in another aspect produces the 5 *tanmātras* (the sensory qualities); (d) these 5 *tanmātras*, again, produce the 5 gross elements which do not produce any new level of reals. Thus *buddhi*, *ahamkāra*, and 5 *tanmātras* are both produced and produce new levels of reals.

(iii) The third class has 16 members which are produced (*vikṛtis*), but do not produce anything (not *prakṛtis*). They are, as explained above, 11 organs and 5 gross elements. (iv) The fourth class has only one kind of reals, namely, the pure subjects which are many in number. But they are counted as belonging to one level for these pure subjects are neither produced nor do they produce anything; that is, they are neither *vikṛtis* nor *prakṛtis*. We experience multiplicity of objects which are effects ultimately of the primordial matter which cannot be caused. Otherwise, this would lead to an infinite regress of effects and their causes. So the primordial matter which is the cause of everything objective is itself uncaused. As has been already stated, the other uncaused reals are the pure subjects (*puruṣas*) which are eternal. Thus Sāṃkhya ontology is regarded as dualistic, admitting *puruṣas* and material *prakṛti*.\*

\*Based on discourses (Tarapada Chaudhuri Lectures) by Professor Sibajiban Bhattacharyya on *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* in May 1991.



## SPECTRUM

And where'er the grieving goddess  
Turns her melancholy gaze,  
Sunk in vilest degradation  
Man his loathsomeness displays

Mitya broke into sobs and seized Alyosha's hand. "My dear, my dear, in degradation, in degradation now, too. There's a terrible amount of suffering for man on earth, a terrible lot of trouble. I hardly think of anything but of that degraded man—because I am that man myself....

And in the very depths of that degradation I begin a hymn of praise. Let me be accursed. Let me be vile and base, only let me kiss the hem of the veil in which my God is shrouded. Though I may be following the devil, I am Thy son, O Lord, and I love Thee, and I feel the joy without which the world cannot stand.

Joy everlasting fostereth  
The soul of all creation,  
It is her secret ferment fires  
The cup of life with flame.  
At bounteous Nature's kindly breast,  
All things that breathe drink joy.

Beauty is a terrible and awful thing! It is terrible because it has not been fathomed and never can be fathomed, for God sets us nothing but riddles. Here the boundaries meet and all contradictions exist side by side. I am not a cultivated man, brother, but I've thought a lot about this. Beauty! I can't endure the thought that a man of lofty mind and heart begins with the ideal of the Madonna and ends with the ideal of Sodom. What's still more awful is that a man with the ideal of Sodom in his soul does not renounce the ideal of the Madonna, and his heart may be on fire with that ideal, genuinely on fire, just as in his days of youth

and innocence. Yes, man is broad, too broad, indeed. I'd have him narrower. What to the mind is shameful is beauty and nothing else to the heart. The awful thing is that beauty is mysterious as well as terrible. God and the devil are fighting there and the battlefield is the heart of man."<sup>1</sup>

Love your enemies; do good to those that hate you; pray for those that spitefully use and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your father, which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise upon the good and upon the evil, and sends his rain upon the just and upon the unjust.<sup>2</sup>

Thus space to many millions I will give/Where, though not safe, yet free and active they may live./Green fertile fields, where straightway from their birth/Both men and beast live happy on the newest earth,/Settled forthwith along the mighty hill/Raised by a daring, busy people's will./Within, a land like Paradise; outside,/Up to the brink may rage the mighty tide,/And where it gnaws and would burst through or sap,/A common impulse hastes to close the gap./Yes, to this thought I hold unswerving,/To wisdom's final fruit, profoundly true:/Of freedom and of life he only is deserving/Who every day must conquer them anew./Thus here, by danger girt, the active day/Of childhood, manhood, age will pass away./Aye! such a throng I fain would see,/Stand on free soil among a people free./That lofty moment I now feel in this:/I now enjoy the highest moment's bliss.<sup>3</sup>

1. F. M. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Bk. III. Ch. III. [Verses from Schiller's *Hymn to Joy* quoted by Dostoevsky]
2. Matthew 5.44.
3. J. W. von Goethe, *Faust* II. V./11563-86.

[Condensed and Rearranged]



## INTERCULTURAL NEWS AND VIEWS

### Rights and Duties: Two Sides of the Same Coin

That rights and duties are correlative is clear in the Indian Constitution. The following excerpts are reproduced from a booklet entitled 'Our Rights and Duties: Two Sides of the Same Coin', produced by the Ministry of I&B, Government of India, New Delhi, April 1991:

India achieved independence after a prolonged struggle. Political freedom as well as social and economic emancipation were the goals of the national movement. Further, in view of the multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-racial composition of the population, adequate provisions were needed to safeguard the interests of all sections of the society. The Indian Constitution incorporates prominently these avowed objectives of the nation.

#### FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Fundamental Rights represent the basic values cherished by the people of this country since the inception of national movement and are aimed at protecting the dignity of the individual and creating conditions in which every human being can develop his personality to the fullest extent. They weave a pattern of guarantee on the basic structure of human rights and impose negative obligations on the State not to encroach on individual liberty in its various dimensions. *These rights are regarded as fundamental because they are most essential for the attainment by the individual of his full intellectual, moral and spiritual status.*

Fundamental Rights can be classified under seven heads:

1. Right to Equality
2. Right to Freedom
3. Right against Exploitation

4. Right to Freedom of Religion
5. Cultural and Educational Rights
6. Saving of Certain Laws
7. Right to Constitutional Remedies

#### FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES

Since rights and duties are correlative Fundamental Duties are, therefore, intended to serve as a constant reminder to every citizen that while the Constitution has specifically conferred on him certain Fundamental Rights, it also requires him to observe certain basic norms of democratic conduct and behaviour. The Fundamental Duties are as follows:

- (i) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideal and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- (ii) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;
- (iii) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- (iv) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- (v) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- (vi) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;
- (vii) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life and to have compassion for living creatures;
- (viii) to develop a scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of enquiry and reform;
- (ix) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;
- (x) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievements.



## INSTITUTE NEWS

### Convention on Harmony of Religions

As part of the celebrations of the 155th birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna, the Institute organized a convention on 'Harmony of Religions' on 2 March 1991. Swami Lokeswarananda presided.

The programme started with an opening song by the members of the Institute's Vivekananda Study Circle (Junior). It was followed by readings of excerpts from the Scriptures of different religions by Swami Chidananda. Next Swami Lokeswarananda gave the introductory address. He said every religion was based on some basic truths and they were there to know and assimilate those truths. He welcomed the participants.

Eminent scholars representing their respective religions participated in the convention. Mr Shilananda Brahmachary read a paper on Buddhism. The paper pointed out that Buddha never encouraged clinging to one's own view, taking it to be the absolute truth. He rather advised his disciples to see everything with an open mind. He preached dharma to cross the ocean of sufferings. Dharma was a means and not the end. A special address on 'The Russian Religious Tradition' (see page 173 in the previous issue) was given by Professor Boris A. Ivanov, Acting Head of the Department of Indian History, Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow University, Moscow. After that, Reverend K. P. Aleaz, Professor of Religions, Bishop's College, Calcutta, spoke on 'Some Elements of Religious Harmony Enjoined in the Bible' (see page 99 in the April 1991 issue). His address was followed by a special address on 'What is a True Religion' (see page 139 in the May 1991 issue) by Dr Alexander M. Dubiansky, Head of

the Department of Indian Philosophy, Moscow State University, Moscow, and another special address on 'The Latvian Christian Mission' (see page 102 in the April 1991 issue) by Mrs Marina G. Kostenetskaya, USSR People's Deputy, Member of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Riga, Latvia Republic. Dr Sitanath Goswami, Professor of Sanskrit, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, spoke on Hinduism. In his view, it would not be proper to call Hinduism a religion, because it has no fixed system of worship nor a single system of faith. In Indian tradition, Hinduism is called dharma. In its ambit so many religions are included. Hinduism is the base from where so many religions have emerged through ages from Vedic period onwards. Dharma envisages not only liberation but also prosperity, both material and mental. Dr Osman Ghani, Reader in Islamic History and Culture, University of Calcutta, delivered his address on Islam. According to him, Islam has many sects. Islam believes in as many faiths, so many paths and looks upon the world of humanity as a great family. The basic tenet of Islam is 'love'. Next Mr Saran Singh, Chairman, Sikh Cultural Centre, and Editor, *The Sikh Review*, Calcutta, spoke on Sikhism. He remarked that harmony of religions could be best assured if women were involved, for half the human race consisted of women. Further, he said, 'Once we accept that one universal spirit pervades the human beings, we cannot but cherish the harmony of religions.' The participation by these scholars over, Swami Lokeswarananda delivered his presidential address and expressed his gratitude to them.

The function ended with a cultural programme. Mr L. Anatoly (from Lithuania) gave a sitar recital and Mr Sarathi Chatterjee sang devotional songs.



## Duet Violin Recital

The Institute organized a duet violin recital by Pandit V. G. Jog and Mr L. Subrahmaniam accompanied by Ustad Alla Rakha on the tabla and Mr U. K. Shivaraman on the *mridangam* in the Vivekananda Hall on 15 February 1991 at 6.30 p.m.

## Reception to Foreign Guests

A reception to the foreign guests staying at the Institute's International Guest House was held by the Institute in its Reception Room on 25 February 1991. Monks, brahmacharins and participants of the Institute were among the select audience. The function opened with a welcome address by Swami Lokeshwarananda. He introduced the guests to the audience and presented each of the guests with a nosegay and sweets. In reply, a few important guests on behalf of the guests expressed their gratitude to the Institute. The function ended with a video show on Lithuania.

The following were the guests:

1. Mrs Susan Walters, Member of the Vedanta Society, St. Louise
2. Mrs Alena Adamkova, Postgraduate student of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow
3. Mrs Makarenko Natalia, Senior Scientific Research Fellow, Moscow
4. Ms Kathleen Taylor, studying Indology, England
5. Madam Marina G. Kostenetskaya, USSR People's Deputy, Member of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Riga, Latvia Republic
6. Ms Nancy Schricker, Santa Barbara, U.S.A.
7. Ms Pamela Hoye, Santa Barbara
8. Ms Kosyakina Lyubov, Engineer, Moscow
9. Mrs Preeti Bagchi, Laboratory Technician, U.S.A.

10. Ms Jessica Moore, Medical Student (British)
11. Mrs Rezia Begum, Bangladesh
12. Ms Rabee Khatun, Bangladesh
13. Professor Jean Ghuysen, Scientist, Belgium
14. Mrs Maria Ghuysen, Belgium
15. Dr S. N. Chaudhuri, Retired Professor, U.S.A.
16. Dr Harold De Cheatham, Professor, U.S.A.
17. Mrs Cheatham, U.S.A.
18. Miss Mausufa Ali, Student, Bangladesh
19. Ms Afroz Akman, Research Fellow, Bangladesh
20. Mrs Sujata Sengupta, U.S.A.
21. Daughter of Mrs Sengupta, U.S.A.
22. Mrs Ali, Bangladesh
23. Mr Arjan De Hans, Research Scholar, Netherlands
24. Madam Tamara Konkova, Vivekananda Society, Moscow
25. Dr Alexander M. Dubiansky, Head of the Department of Indian Philosophy, Moscow State University
26. Professor Boris A. Ivanov, Acting Head of the Department of Indian History, Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow University, Moscow
27. Mr L. Anatoly, Engineer, Lithuania, USSR
28. Mr O. Vytautas, Member Roerich Society, Lithuania, USSR
29. Mr Ashraj Ali, Bangladesh
30. Madam Irena Zaleckiene, Secretary, Roerich Society, Lithuania
31. Madam Yadviga Mackevichene, Secretary to the President of Lithuania, Mr V. Landvergis
32. Mr Ablakim Tourdiev, Artist of Uzbek Friendship Society
33. Mr Asliddin Issaev, Artist of Uzbek Friendship Society, Tashkent, and
34. Mr Kirill Novoselski, Scientist of Academy of Sciences, URALs Branch, USSR



## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Bhagavad Gita*. By O. P. GHAI. Foreword by M. P. PANDIT. Institute of Personal Development, L-10, Green Park Extension, New Delhi 110 016. 1990. pp. 116. Rs. 75.00.

*Unity in Diversity*. Compiled and edited by O. P. GHAI. Institute of Personal Development, New Delhi 110 016. 1986. pp. 132. Rs. 50.00.

THE FIRST book, *The Bhagavad Gita*, summarized in English, has been rightly described, on the title-page, as a clear, simple guide to the understanding of the true values of life and to the achievement of supreme happiness and peace of mind. The author has offered the essence of the *Gita* in a lucid and attractive manner. Those readers who do not have the time or energy or learning to study this great scripture in the original version or in its entirety will find this book of great value. Moreover, sometimes the common reader is confused by the opposite points of view of different commentators. Sri Ghai has not identified himself with any particular school of interpretation and has steered clear of all controversies.

In a brief but illuminating Introduction the author points out that the principal subjects discussed in the *Gita* are three: knowledge, action, and devotion. Sri Krishna teaches a synthesis of these three approaches but he lays more emphasis on action because it is the easiest of the spiritual paths. The quintessence of his teaching is the practice of self-control, selfless work, and surrender to God. These are actually the foundations of happiness and peace of mind.

In a well-written Foreword Sri Pandit observes: 'Free from pedantry, it is a summarised version rendered in simple

English with taste and aesthetic grace. This has been possible because the author himself is a sincere devotee of Lord Krishna.

THE SECOND book under review is an excellent guide to the understanding of the fundamental unity underlying the great living religions of the world. There are at present eleven major religions: Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Jainism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Shinto, and Sikhism. The compiler has selected excerpts from the sacred writings of these religions under 29 important topics: Anger, Brotherhood, Courage, Deeds, Duty, Evil, Faith, Family, Forgiveness, Friends, Giving, Golden Rule, Guidance, Happiness, Hate, Home, Immortality, Justice, Love, Man, Meditation, Obedience, Peace, Sincerity, Repentance, War, Wealth, Work, and Wrath. It is a strange coincidence that this book of devotion begins with 'anger' and ends with 'wrath'. Why should the compiler opt for the alphabetical order of the groups which hardly makes any sense?

The compiler has attempted to cull the most significant passages of wisdom from great religious works so that his book serves as a guide to the comprehension of the basic unity underlying the diverse religions. Readers of this anthology will derive a lot of comfort and inspiration from its scintillating pages. Here is a specimen excerpt under the head 'Guidance' from a book on Judaism: 'Trust in God at all times. He will lead you even through the shadows of death and will protect you in the presence of your enemies.' Unfortunately the sources of quotations are nowhere mentioned. They could at least be given in an appendix.

VISVANATH CHATTERJEE



# CALENDAR FOR JULY 1991

	5.15	p.m.	Devotional Songs: In the Shrine from 5.15 p.m. to 6.15 p.m. every workday
1	5.30	"	<i>Law and Common Man</i> : Hon'ble Justice Mrs Padma Khastgir/ Hon'ble Justice Mr Monoranjan Mallick
	6.15	"	* <i>Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
2	5.30	"	** <i>Sāmkhya-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	"	<i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
3	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
4	5.30	"	<i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	"	Film: <i>Ānandamath</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
5	5.30	"	<i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	"	** <i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
6	6.00	"	<i>India's Spiritual Tradition: Buddhism—I</i> : Sukomal Chaudhuri/Swami Rasajnananda
8	5.30	"	<i>India's Spiritual Tradition: Buddhism—II</i> : Sukomal Chaudhuri/Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	"	* <i>Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
9	5.30	"	** <i>Sāmkhya-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	"	<i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
10	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
11	5.30	"	<i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	"	Film: <i>Rajanī</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
12	5.30	"	<i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	"	** <i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
13	6.00	"	<i>Bouddha Tirtha Sri Lanka</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
15	6.15	"	* <i>Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
16	5.30	"	** <i>Sāmkhya-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	"	<i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
17	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
18	5.30	"	<i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	"	Film: <i>Brojabuli</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
19	5.30	"	<i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
20	4.45	"	Vivekananda Study Circle (Junior) : Songs, Recitations, and Stories about Sri Krishna
	5.00	"	Vivekananda Study Circle
	6.00	"	Symposium (in English and Bengali) : <i>The Life and Teachings of Holy Mother Sri Sri Sarada Devi</i> : Participants : Swami Rasajnananda, Swami Bhairavananda, Swami Balabhadrananda/ Swami Lokeswarananda
		"	Devotional Songs by Swami Balabhadrananda
22	6.15	"	* <i>Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
24	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
25	5.30	"	<i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	"	Film: <i>Priyabāndhabī</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
26	5.30	"	<i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	"	** <i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
27	5.00	"	Vivekananda Study Circle
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29	5.30	"	<i>Bhārater Madhyayuger Itihāse Ādhyātmik Naitikatār Upādān—II</i> (Bengali) : Amalendu De/D. P. Sinha
	6.15	"	* <i>Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
30	5.30	"	** <i>Sāmkhya-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	"	<i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
31	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda



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(Continued from second cover)

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*All correspondence to be addressed to:*

Swami Lokeshwarananda

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# THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION INSTITUTE OF CULTURE

THE INSTITUTE is rooted in the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) who stressed, among other things, the equal validity of all religions, the potential divinity of man, and service to man as a way of worshipping God. Sri Ramakrishna's chief disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), carried far and wide these teachings which, really speaking, constitute the core of India's oldest philosophy, Vedanta. Later, in 1897, he founded, in order to propagate these ideas, a non-proselytizing religious organization, the Ramakrishna Mission, which, besides teaching Vedanta, gives concrete service to the community by running schools, colleges, hospitals, orphanages, and so on. Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission had 152 branches in India and abroad in March 1990.

## PURPOSE

ONE SUCH branch is the Institute started in 1938 as an offshoot of Sri Ramakrishna's first birth-centenary celebration held in 1936. With humble beginnings in small rented rooms in north Calcutta, the Institute has grown over the years, and the fact that it now occupies its present magnificent building (completed in 1960) in south Calcutta is a testimony to its popularity.

While culture is the Institute's specific field of study, it is not national culture alone that it studies, but that culture which is the common heritage of all mankind and to which every race and religion has made its own contributions. Such a study, the Institute believes, will provide the necessary psychological background to the cementing process which technology has initiated between the races of mankind.

## ACTIVITIES

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Throughout the year the Institute has a busy schedule of lectures, debates, elocution competitions, seminars, symposia, study circles, and scripture classes, and religious

congregations, through which knowledge, both modern and ancient, is imparted to the public. Devotional songs and film shows also constitute regular features of the Institute's activities all round the year.

### *Vivekananda Study Circle*

To encourage the youth to study Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature the Institute has several programmes of which the Vivekananda Study Circle is one. The Study Circle meets twice a month. The participants are also offered opportunities for field study of how the teachings of Swami Vivekananda are being implemented by the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.

### *School of Languages*

Since language is a barrier to understanding others, the Institute regards the teaching of languages as an integral part of its work in the field of intercultural exchange. The Institute's SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES, with over 4,000 students on the roll, teaches 13 languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Persian, Russian, Sanskrit, Spanish, Spoken English, and Urdu.

### *International House*

Attached to the Institute there is an INTERNATIONAL HOUSE meant for the Institute's guests and for those scholars and students who come from different parts of India as well as from abroad at the invitation of the Institute or of universities and other learned societies for study and research or simply for exchange of ideas with Indian scholars. This bringing together of scholars of different nationalities helps create a bridge that unites minds and spirits having different backgrounds.

### *Library*

To assist scholars in their work of study and research, there is at the Institute a GENERAL LIBRARY, with a reading room

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# Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture

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The **BULLETIN** is published monthly. It reproduces lectures given and papers read at the Institute. The Institute invites scholars to deliver lectures or read papers on subjects which further the purpose of the Institute and contribute to its work on the national and international levels.

The **BULLETIN** also carries editorial observations on matters of cultural significance, book reviews, international cultural news, and news of the activities of the Institute.

The Institute is not necessarily in agreement with the views of contributors to whom freedom of expression of opinion is given.

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# Observations

## *Resist Not Evil*

Is it sound advice that we should not resist evil? If we do not resist evil, it will keep growing and will soon tear apart the social fabric. Crime will increase and life and property will be insecure. Those who are strong will do whatever they please and the weak will be left at their mercy. The law of the jungle will prevail. The evil propensities in man will grow unchecked and man will be reduced to a brute. Truth, justice, equality, friendship—all these will disappear, society will crumble, and civilization will be erased.

How do you keep crime under check if you do not resist evil? One well-known recipe which saints and seers advocate is—love. They usually say, 'Hate the evil, but love the evil-doer.' It is a good idea, but does love go so far as to totally eradicate evil from the human mind? Holy men and women have always preached love and have themselves loved others also, but it cannot be said that they have succeeded in changing human nature. This is no argument against love as a corrective force; nothing can rouse in man his good propensities more than love. When the good propensities are strong the evil propensities automatically lose their force. Somehow or other the evil that is in the heart of man has to be overcome. This is as much in his own interest as in the interest of the community. An evil man can never be happy. When he hurts others he hurts himself also, perhaps more so. The best discipline is self-discipline. You have to impose on yourself rules about how you are going to behave in different situations. There may be provocations, what will you do then? Christ asks you not to react. If somebody hits you on one cheek, invite him to hit you on the other—that is his advice. Will you do that? Should

you do that? Why should you do that? Is that not cowardice? Whom you are helping in doing that? Not him, any way. You are rather encouraging him to behave in the same way with others. You are not teaching him self-control, you are teaching him irresponsible behaviour, for which he may have to pay dearly someday. What does Sri Krishna say to Arjuna? Just the opposite of what Christ advises. He accuses Arjuna of cowardice because he does not want to fight with his cousins over his rights. Arjuna says he will rather live by begging than try to wrest from his cousins what rightfully belongs to him by causing bloodshed. According to Sri Krishna, this is not only cowardice, this is also dishonesty. Arjuna does not and cannot mean what he says. There is hate in his heart, but he pretends he is full of love, an attitude for which no condemnation is too strong. By all means, Arjuna has to be honest with himself. 'Be honest and get killed, if the worst must happen', that is Sri Krishna's advice.

Sri Krishna then goes on to expound when and where good and evil overlap. They are basically one and the same, but if you see them different, that is because of your own ignorance, because both good and evil are within you. So long as there is evil within you, you will see evil outside and it should be your duty, as a responsible member of society, to check that evil. Tagore condemns the man who sees evil, but does not stop it. If you see somebody doing something evil and you do nothing to stop him, you are as much guilty as the man who does the evil.

Only people like Buddha and Christ who are free from evil themselves can be excused for not resisting evil.



# VEDĀNTA AND THE CONTEMPORARY PROBLEM OF MAN'S ESTRANGEMENT

BASANT K. LAL, M.A., Ph.D.

*Dr Basant K. Lal, Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy, Magadh University, presented this paper in a symposium on 'The Indian Philosophical Systems: Their Basic Unity and Relevance Today' organized by the Institute on 3 February 1990 with funds from an endowment in memory of Mrs Pritilata Kanjilal created by her niece, Mrs Leena Mukherjee.*

THE FIRST half of the twentieth century has talked about the problem of 'man's estrangement' in such a varied way that any further talk about it may, at the first sight, be brushed aside as 'hackneyed'. There have been some effective radicals who consider this problem as a 'non-issue'—raised only by the fanciful insights of some philosophers of a particular orientation. Even so, this paper has taken up this problem for consideration, because it proceeds under the awareness that there is one such dimension of the problem of man's estrangement which even the radicals would concede as constituting an aspect of our normal living. This, in a very subtle way, has entered into our mental make-up and has started affecting both our emotional attitudes and creative capacities. As we shall notice, the problem of man's estrangement here refers not so much to the oft-repeated phenomena of 'dehumanisation', 'feelings of anguish and superfluity', etc. It refers to what can be called 'work-estrangement'—'gradual slackening of dedication' even towards our eagerly chosen tasks. Such an attitudinal malaise has penetrated the very

being of the present-day man and has become clearly visible at least in the lives of the present-day elites—in the lives of those who have started leading a life of 'modernity' deriving to the full the fruits of material comforts brought to their doors by Science and Technology. Its expressions indeed vary from society to society, but in a subtle way it is entering the life of every modern man. It has assumed the form of a problem because gradually it makes 'man' in a way 'sick'.

## II

It is at this point that the paper intends to look towards Vedānta. As it is not possible to comprehend, in one paper, all the different shades of Vedāntic thought, this paper will primarily rely on the Advaita insight. There, too, it will not just repeat the 'slogan' that the Advaita thinking contains the panacea of all malaise and sickness, since that kind of 'chatter' would take us neither here nor there. Advaita Vedānta is one philosophy which, even though preoccupied with the Supreme, remains fully interested in the mundane



details of life. As such, even for tackling the day-to-day existential problems of life, one can look towards Advaita Vedānta. In the present context this looking towards Vedānta does not mean that Vedānta will provide a ready solution for the problem of man's estrangement—it merely means that viewing this problem in the Vedāntic spirit would open a new way of putting up with it—a way which without negating the elements of Technology-determined life would infuse a sense of 'clan' into the present-day work-culture.

### III

As such the present deliberations would proceed under *three* heads: firstly, it would try to determine the broad features of what it considers to be the basic problem of man's estrangement, which is affecting the life and work of the modern man. Then it would try to highlight that aspect of the Vedāntic spirit which appears relevant in this context. These two stages would be brief in so far as they would prepare the background in the light of which the final deliberations would take shape. So, finally an attempt would be made to demonstrate as to how a comprehension of the present-day situation in the Vedāntic spirit might open out a way of meeting this situation in a manly manner. Only one clarification has to be made at the very outset—that is, that the paper seeks to utilize Vedānta in a very modest way. Ordinarily, in talking about Advaita Vedānta the Vedāntic *Ideal* is emphasized so much that the Vedāntic *concern* is almost undermined. The ideal of '*mokṣa*'—the realization of 'I am the Brahman'—is so impressively lofty that people seem to forget that the *concern* of Advaita Vedānta is the ordinary man—the man who lives and moves in the existential situation of the day-to-day life. As such,

the aspect of Advaita Vedāntic spirit which this paper seeks to highlight and make use of relates to the existential dimension of the Advaita thought—to that dimension where it exalts the ordinary man to cultivate a particular attitude towards life's situation.

### IV

Let us then begin our deliberations by determining the basic problem of man's estrangement. Since we are considering the *contemporary* problem of man's estrangement, it is obvious that this centres round the life determined by the present-day Science and Technology. Thoughtful persons and philosophers alike have talked about the 'alienating' effects of this kind of life. They have been repeatedly asserting that this process has set in a process of 'dehumanisation'. They mean that this kind of life is taking away from man his uniqueness—his manness. By subjecting man to a rigorously mechanized way of living this kind of life is reducing man himself to the status of a machine, and thereby is upsetting his life of feelings and aspirations—of fond longings and kinship ties. This paper does not intend to enter into the merits or shortcomings of this analysis. It is concerned with the fact that this analysis reveals a subtler dimension of man's present living—which is so vital that it cannot be ignored. It refers to its dimension at the level of human sensibility. Estrangement has penetrated into this level—and that is a matter of concern. It is now noticeable not only in technologically advanced societies, but also in developing societies like that of India—and that at all its levels—of course, in varying degrees. The tendencies generated by the technology-determined life of the present times have an enslaving effect, and yet they do not carry with themselves their



own equilibrium. Consequently, they upset established ways of living and thinking without 'clearly' replacing the old ways with any new ones. The fancy and aspirations of the individual are suddenly enhanced without proper regard to the availability of means for their fulfilment. Man is made to surrender his initiative, and yet is uncertain about the alternative. As a result of this, his life becomes a continuous attempt at newer and newer fulfilments, none of which really is able to fulfil his aspirations. His ways become uncertain, and he is never sure of his own interests or pursuits. Very soon he gets tired of the object of his desire, no task is able to sustain his interest for long; 'digression' becomes the way of his life, and consequently, his zest for living becomes a victim. He is caught in the cobweb of routine, and so he is led to perform his work in a mechanical manner and is constrained to lose his sense of dedication. He is very much 'there', and yet he is, in a way, alienated from his work. One has only to look within and analyse his own daily work-routine, and he will be convinced that even in the midst of his work he is away from it. He is always in search of something 'novel', his attitudes are always fleeting, he is ever hankering for diversion, and there is no diversion which can either sustain his interest or restore to him his dedication to work. A very clear symptom of this rather universally present phenomenon is that everybody has grievances against his own profession. This mental make-up represents the phenomenon of '*estrangement*' with which the present-day man seems to be completely infected. 'Estrangement', therefore, refers to that subtle feeling in which even freely-chosen tasks appear to be remote, in which one appears to be 'aloof' and 'away' even from the pursuits that

he is actively engaged in. In advanced societies this is causing mental tensions and psychiatric problems, in developing societies like that of India it is affecting both efficiency and output.

## V

The paper intends to suggest that a comprehension of this situation in the Vedāntic spirit would open out a manly way of putting up with it. As it has already been pointed out, the paper intends to confine itself to the Vedāntic 'concern'—and not so much to the 'Vedāntic Ideal'. Not that the paper overlooks the fact that for Vedānta the ideal is the ultimate, but it is aware that Vedāntic discipline proceeds under the awareness that the 'ideal' can be apprehended gradually—in the course of its developing phases of discipline. As such, the paper confines itself to its initial phase—to the ways by adopting which one can pick up the 'tracks' along which he has to proceed.

Therefore, the paper will also emphasize that there is no incompatibility involved in the adopting of the Vedāntic attitude towards the life of 'estrangement' visible today, in so far as these underscored dimensions of Vedānta are not in any way inconsistent with the demands of present-day living. As such, the paper will take into account the following five features of this aspect of Vedāntic thought—(a) the existential stance of Advaita Vedānta, (b) its insistence that one must first recognize the situation he has been placed in, (c) its insistence that man's awareness of his finiteness and temporality means his consciousness of eternity, (d) its emphasis that suffering is not an objective entity, but an experience, and (e) its ultimate emphasis on '*cintana*' and '*manana*' (thinking and reflecting).



These Vedāntic features are not being explained further just in order to avoid repetition; they would be elaborated in the course of the demonstration of their significance in relation to the problem of estrangement. As such, let us deal with them one by one by relating them to the main problem under consideration.

## VI

The existentialists feel that the problem of estrangement is, in reality, the problem of man's existential alienation from himself. They say that this is primarily because man is steadily constrained to lose his sense of human dignity—his sense of manners itself. Their solution consists in trying to restore to man his sense of dignity. It is interesting to find that the general Advaitic stance is almost existential in character, even though it is not similar to that of the existentialist philosophers. Advaita Vedānta has picked up the basic existential stance and makes that its starting point. That 'stance' can be summed up by saying that man's manness consists in leading a life which can continuously be questioned. Sealing off of this spirit is estrangement. Man is in bondage only because he has surrendered his basic character of this 'questioning'. If one begins leading a so-called 'normal' life given by routine, accepting the ways of the order, this basic spirit of 'questioning' is lulled, and this gradually makes that life in a way burdensome and alien to oneself. One of the initial preparations recommended by Advaita Vedānta is called '*nityānitya vastu-viveka*', and what does it stand for? Our classical scholars of Vedānta inform us that it is cultivating the capacity of discriminating between the real and the unreal. What does it signify in the present context? It signifies that acceptance of whatever comes to us from

mass-order is '*anitya*', and that one must question it in order to see whether the '*nitya*' lies therein. This is the basic spirit of 'questioning', which characterizes the very being of man. The present-day technological society has provided to him a mass-order of convenience. This sense of convenience and the effortless readiness with which it arrives at our doors lull us to surrender our questioning initiative to this order, and estrangement becomes inevitable. '*Nitya*' is that which supports and enhances man's uniqueness, '*anitya*' is that which hinders it. If one remains alert and continuously alive to the lulling stimuli provided by the present-day mass order, he will be able to ward off its enslaving impact. It is said that the present-day work-culture leads to a loss of meaning in life. This can be restored only by keeping alive one's capacity to 'raise' questions about meaning. Advaita Philosophy is aware of it, and therefore, in its very first step towards '*mokṣa-mārga*' it asserts that one must begin by trying to assess his routine, his day-to-day existence. This is the Advaitin existential stance, and even today this can pave the way for man's coming out of his self-surrender to mass-order leading to estrangement.

## VII

This idea can be developed further by putting it in a different way, and that would bring to light another relevant emphasis of the Advaitic thought. The uniqueness of Advaita thinking lies in the fact that even though it is preoccupied with its ultimate spiritual ideal, it is not indifferent to the mundane affairs of life. Its emphasis on the '*mithyātva*' (falsity) of the world has a transcendent import and not an empirical significance. It asserts that we must first recognize the situation



we are placed in, because it is this awareness which would enable us to recognize the conditions for going beyond it. Usually the Vedāntic emphasis on its ideal is so prominently displayed that one tends to overlook the Vedāntic concern. As such, viewing 'things' in the Advaitic way would mean first trying to 'know' one's own conditions of life. Normally, one flows on the currents of life without feeling the necessity of having an awareness of it. That creates bondage because this means that one has surrendered his own self to outside forces. In the modern language this is 'inauthentic' living since it involves existing without having an awareness of it. That is how the modern man is living today, accepting readily the cobweb of his own technological creation without ever feeling the need of making a conscious assessment of it.

But the question still persists: What is meant by 'recognizing' one's situation of life? What is it to have consciousness of the conditions of one's existence? The estranged individual of the present times is called upon to respond by their commonest nature, and not by their unique propensities. Technologically determined life eliminates variability. Today even 'tasks' are generalized, mass-order tends to prevail almost universally on every member of the technological society. And man lives thus almost as a matter of course accepting its ways almost in a mechanically determined manner. It is at this place that the Vedāntic spirit can be of help. The Technological man never bothers to identify the 'common character' by which he is responding to life's situation. The Advaita thought recommends that responding in terms of common characters is not anti-man as some existentialists tend to think. Their emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual is because

they are somehow led to have the impression that the emphasis on common characters leads to the imposition of mass-order. As against this, the Advaitic vision reveals that this impression itself is not very well founded, since responding by commonest characters may very well open out the way of man's deliverance. What is required is to have a clear awareness of this common character, to identify clearly what this common character is. Vedānta indeed has given to it an ontological dimension, but, at the same time, it also asserts that it is not possible to have a comprehension of that ontological dimension at the initial stage. '*Tat tvam asi*' (That thou art) is the ultimate ontological character that comprehends universally everyone into it; but the common man cannot comprehend this character fully. Therefore, what is required is a gradual expansion of consciousness, which, in its turn, means gradually shunning responses in terms of the individual person and trying to respond in terms of what the individual shares with others. This is a point where the existential requirements of Technological life and Vedāntic Vision tend to meet; the only difference is that Vedānta recommends, not a mechanical surrender to the mass-living, but a *conscious decision* to learn to act in terms of his common character. That enables one to extend and expand one's consciousness. This conscious decision itself would prevent the sense of estrangement, since estrangement is estrangement on account of a sort of a helplessness in preventing the remoteness of one's action. The individual feels estranged because mass-order tends to come to him from outside; the Vedāntic realization, on the other hand, will make even mass-order a matter of conscious and wilful decision of the individual himself, and thus will fulfil the individual also.



## VIII

The last point brings to light another—a very significant feature of the Vedāntic Spirit. '*Brahma Jñāna*' (Knowledge of Brahman) is the ultimate ideal, but as Śaṅkara himself admits, one of the *initial* conditions of this *Jñāna* is a clear awareness of the state of *bondage*. Unless the nature of '*bandhana*' (bondage) is grasped clearly, no step towards release can be taken. That is why Advaita thought maintains that man's awareness of his temporality and finiteness means his awareness of eternity. If this assertion is related to the problem of estrangement, interesting results follow. The modern western thinkers who are perturbed over the problem of estrangement are ever anxious to find ways for overcoming it, for negating it. The Advaitic spirit, on the other hand, will enable us to realize the futility of such a negative venture. They feel that even in order to negate a stage you must first recognize it and accept it. The very acceptance of the situation opens out a way of rising above it. The phenomenon of estrangement appears to be a state of 'alienation' and 'dehumanization' only because the estranged individual fails to own it. But the moment we accept it as a part of our existential situation, we have risen above the situation. Accepting this would mean accepting our own part in bringing about this state, and then what is called 'dehumanization' becomes a wilfully adopted way of life. Yes, in that sense, even Vedānta is a persistent attempt towards dehumanization and, in that sense this process of 'dehumanization' would be complete only when man begins to respond spontaneously by his universal nature—in complete realization of the basic oneness of everything. Understood thus, 'estrangement' is not a burden, but a step towards man's realization of his manners.

## IX

Yet another way of meeting this phenomenon of 'estrangement' is to try to assess it in the way in which Advaita thought understands the phenomenon of '*duḥkha*' (suffering). After all, the fact that estrangement appears to be a problem proves that it is a kind of a '*duḥkha*'. For the Advaita thinker suffering is not an objective reality. It is so not only from the *paramārthika drṣṭi* (transcendental point of view), but even from the *vyāvahārika drṣṭi* (empirical point of view) it is not an objective entity. Suffering, according to Vedānta, is an 'experience'. Had it been an objective entity, its eradication would not have been possible. Suffering is not a metaphysical constituent of the world, it arises *in the experience* of the world. In fact, when the world is viewed in a particular way, this experience emerges. Because that affects us in an adverse manner, because it produces 'pain', it is characterized as '*suffering*'. Such an analysis of 'suffering' enables the Advaitin to emphasize two significant ideas: (1) that the experience of the harshness of life is the only way in which a man can come to his own self; and (2) that if suffering results by experiencing the world in a particular way, it is possible to change that experience by completely revising our ways of experiencing the world. That is what the Advaita Vedānta does. It works out the way of how we can completely revise our ways of experiencing the world.

In the light of such an Advaitic analysis it can be said that 'estrangement' also is not a objective aspect of modern living, but only an 'experience'. Only because 'life' is being viewed in a particular way, estrangement emerges. There is no necessity—no mechanical determination involved—to experience it. We have led ourselves to a situation where we are



constrained to have this experience. But this experience itself is a jolt to our slumbering self. A realization that this experience is on account of our viewing life in a particular way opens up the possibility of our trying to view it in a different way. The realization of this possibility itself has a softening effect on the feeling of estrangement.

## X

Finally, a very certain way of meeting this phenomenon of estrangement is by learning our lessons from the Advaitic emphasis on *cintana* and *manana*. As has been suggested even earlier, existentialists and other thinkers concerned suggest that estrangement arises because technologically determined present-day life has taken away from man his sense of manners and has reduced him almost to the status of a machine. That is why they all plead for a restoration of that sense of man's uniqueness and dignity. But somehow they do not know how to restore that sense of manners. It is at this place that Advaita Vedānta is clearly relevant.

In the Vedāntic language this estrangement itself is a kind of bondage, because in this state man tends to forget his identity. What is intended to be meant by this can be revealed by a simple analysis. It can be seen that the expression 'I am a human being' has ceased to convey any definite sense. When I say, 'I am a father,' or 'I am an Indian,' then these expressions themselves convey some definite sense and some definite modes of expected behaviour. They do embody some sort of an identity for the speaker in a certain organization like a family or a nation. But when I say, 'I am a human being,' in the plain indicative sense (not involving any emotional reference), then this expression does not convey any definite sense, nor does it indicate

any organization affiliating me or any mode of behaviour resulting from that affiliation. That means that the present-day 'estrangement' involves a sort of a 'Loss of human identity'. Western thinkers who have become aware of it are at a loss to think about the ways of restoring this human identity. Advaita thought, in reality, is a consistent attempt to restore this identity, which, according to its perception, has an ontological dimension. As such, for Advaita thought the ultimate restoration of this identity has to be worked out at that level. But let us, for a while, not be involved in ultimate questions, and try to extricate from the Advaitic scheme the basic discipline recommended as vital for the purpose. Advaita Vedānta is perhaps the only system of philosophy which asserts that it is possible to realize oneself by following intensely the process of concentration and thinking. As such, it can be said that the present-day estrangement has resulted only because man has given up his elemental capacity of thinking. The mechanically worked out routine brings to his doorstep everything ready-made and as a matter of course; consequently, deluded by the apparent convenience he gradually starts giving up the need of 'thinking' for himself. Saṅkara says in one of his poems (*Aparokṣānubhūti*) that knowledge takes shape only by continuous and vigorous thinking. Man, therefore, must not give up his elemental capacity of *manana*. '*Nididhyāsana*' (profound and repeated meditation) is no doubt a distant goal, but '*nididhyāsana*' is also nothing but an attempt to realize in direct experience what one has learnt through '*manana*'. Therefore '*manana*' is the way to meet every kind of estrangement. Such a persistent indulgence in thinking will keep one conscious of himself, and the moment this element of '*I-awareness*' is introduced in life's scheme, the process of the conquest of estrangement comes to life.



## WOMANHOOD—IN THE EYES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

MITA MAZUMDAR, M.A.

*Mrs Mita Mazumdar delivered this lecture in Bengali last March at the Institute on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The following is the translation of her speech:*

THE UPANIṢAD says, 'Tvaṁ strī tvaṁ pumāṇasi tvaṁ kumāra uta vā kumārī' (Thou art woman, Thou art man, Thou art youth and maiden too).<sup>1</sup> This signifies there is no male-female difference in the Ātman, the Divine Inner Self. One Ātman is present in all beings.

Swamiji [Swami Vivekananda] held this Upaniṣadic attitude towards the world that enabled him to say, 'Is there any sex-distinction in the Atman (Self)? Out with the differentiation between man and woman—all is Atman!'<sup>2</sup> But he could not be satisfied experiencing the truth of Advaita—Oneness—just for himself. Instead, he sacrificed his life so that people scorched by the miseries of worldly life could attain freedom and eternal peace by experiencing this Divine Oneness.

But what made Swami Vivekananda so unlike other Vedantists was that he not only unveiled the Absolute Truth for all, but he also accepted the phenomenal world and delineated for countless millions the path of gradual unfoldment. For he

could see that a majority of people in every society needed a certain amount of experience of enjoyment, to see through the vanity of it, and then renunciation would come to them. While considering the various schemes of national progress, Swamiji thought equally about men and women, especially he worried about the upliftment of Indian women. Let us remember this before we discuss the topic, 'Womanhood—In the Eyes of Swami Vivekananda'.

Sri Ramakrishna saw all women as manifestations of the Divine Mother and Swamiji shared his guru's view. Morning shows the day. As such we find Swamiji's predisposition, though in a nascent form, to Mother worship even in early childhood. In a deserted attic at home, 'Bile' (Swamiji's childhood name) would sit with his friend Hari in meditation, deeply engrossed in the thought of Sītā. After 'Bile' had become Narendranath, and Narendranath turned into Swami Vivekananda, he revealed to what extent he was inspired by the

1 Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, IV.3.

2 The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. VI, p.273.



character of Sitā in whom he saw a perfect model of the Divine Mother.

The first woman in a child's life is his mother who plays a very significant role in shaping the character of her offspring. Modern psychology admits this, and 'Bile' was no exception. The extraordinary memory, purity, and devotion to truth found in Swamiji's mother, Bhuvaneshwari Devi, were easily infused into the character of Swamiji. He also inherited her royal, majestic bearing.

Swamiji loved his mother very deeply. His devotion to her continued throughout his life. Even when he was a wandering monk travelling through various places in India, he would suddenly be seized with a great longing for his mother. This restlessness would be assuaged only when he received the information that she was well. Towards the end of his life, when he was staying at Belur Math and was in a high spiritual state, he would regularly ask for news of her. Bhuvaneshwari Devi would sometimes come to the Math to seek advice on family matters. When from the ground floor, she would call up to his room, 'Bilu, Bilu,' the world-renowned Swami Vivekananda would instantly appear at his door and, like a little obedient child, come down the stairs hurriedly to see her. He suffered a great deal till the end of his life because he always felt he could do very little for his mother. This intimate, symbiotic relationship with mother undoubtedly coloured his whole attitude towards women.

When Narendranath as a young college student began to attend the Brāhmo Samāj, he had no faith in Śakti, the

Power of Brahman, the Divine Mother. Later, under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna, he came to accept and adore her in the form of Kālī, the primal and dynamic power of God. He realized then that it is the Divine Mother who is responsible for the creation, maintenance, and dissolution of the universe. This adoration for the Divine Energy and strength made him so fond of the Upanishads. 'Strength, strength is what the Upanishads speak to me from every page,'<sup>3</sup> he said. It was, perhaps, for this reason he often said: 'I preach only the Upanishads. If you look, you will find that I have never quoted anything but the Upanishads. And of the Upanishads, it is only that one idea *strength*... Strength and fearlessness.'<sup>4</sup> In fact, this Vedantic lion roared throughout, 'Arise, Awake!'<sup>5</sup> For the Ātman cannot be attained by the weak ('*Nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ*'<sup>6</sup>).

Thus he tried to infuse into people sunk deep in a sleep of *taṃas* (inertia) the spirit of activity, i.e. *rajas*. It was in this vein that he asked the youths to play football instead of studying the *Gītā*. He knew, after they had become active, they would gradually attain *sattva*, purity and calmness, which is a higher state.

Swamiji saw that in India, Śakti (Power) was sleeping; as women were neglected, much power was being dissipated. He said, 'There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.'<sup>7</sup>

3 Ibid., Vol.III, p.237.

4 Quoted in Sister Nivedita, *The Master As I Saw Him*, Calcutta, 1977, pp.167,8.

5 *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol.VII, p.182.

6 *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, III.2.4.

7 *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol.VI, p.328.



Swamiji had boundless confidence in and highest regard for women. He used to say they were the embodiments of power. 'With five hundred men, he [Swamiji] would say, the conquest of India might take fifty years: with as many women, not more than a few weeks.'<sup>8</sup> Yet, in spite of such esteem, there was a great gulf of difference between Swamiji's attitude and the present Western and Indian attitude towards women, which emphasizes differences in sex. Sister Christine in her reminiscences of Swamiji at Thousand Island Park wrote: 'We were allowed to climb up and slide down rocks without an extended arm to help us. When he sensed our feeling ... he answered ... "If you were old or weak or helpless, I should help you. But you are quite able to jump across this brook or climb this path without help. You are as able as I am. Why should I help you? Because you are a woman? ... Don't you see what is behind all these attentions from men to women?"'<sup>9</sup>

Though Swamiji did not conform to conventional modes of courtesy, he taught us how to respect women. He gave *sannyāsa* to a woman in America because he saw in her nothing but the sexless Divine Self. He knew he would be criticized for such an unorthodox step by many in India, but he did not simply bother. Similarly, when wandering about in the city of Cairo, Swamiji lost his way and entered a forbidden part of the city, he was pained to see the immodest gestures of some women. He cried out, 'Poor children! Poor creatures! They have put their divinity in their beauty.'<sup>10</sup>

He literally started weeping. Seeing Swamiji's deep sympathy and unworldly

attitude, the women understood that they had misjudged him and that he was a god-like man!

Also, think of the incident at the palace of the Raja of Khetri. Hearing that a nautch-girl was about to sing, Swamiji, then a young sannyasi, left the room. But the girl in a sorrowful voice sang the song of Sūradāsa beginning, 'O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities! Thy Name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness.' Charmed by the purity and message of the song, Swamiji returned, and as soon as the song was over, he blessed the girl. At this, her latent divinity was awakened and from that day she began to live a decent life.

Swamiji was especially concerned about the suffering of Indian women. How to awaken their sleeping divine power was a question that haunted him very deeply. And, at last he came to the conclusion that at the root of their suffering was their lack of education. The experiences in the West had opened his eyes in this matter. Therefore, he said again and again: Educate the women and give them their freedom. Then they will make their own destiny.

But Swamiji knew that great care must be taken as to the type of education women were given. He was afraid of the evils which might come from adopting the western methods' of education. As such, he stated unequivocally that the right kind of education would be the one that is based on religion and the cultural heritage of India.

Through devotion to religion and morality, Indian women would be able to improve their lot and elevate their

8 Sister Nivedita, *The Master As I Saw Him*, Calcutta, 1977, p.260.

9 *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati, 1983, p.198.

10 Ibid., p.261.



lives. Along with this, they must learn some English, history, geography, mathematics, art, and housekeeping—in short, all the ordinary details of daily life. This will make them independent, free; because if he hated anything at all, it was spineless dependence.

Sister Christine writes, 'From men he demanded manliness, and from women the corresponding quality for which there is no word. Whatever it is, it is the opposite of self-pity, the enemy of weakness and indulgence. This attitude had the effect of a tonic. Something long dormant was aroused and with it came strength and freedom.'<sup>11</sup>

Now the question arises: Who is able to take on this great work of arousing the power in women? Swamiji said: To work for the good of the women of India, some real lionesses are needed. They must have three qualities—purity, intense faith in the guru, and devotion to God. He wanted a thousand enlightened women aglow with the light of spirituality, like Gauri Ma, to take a great vow of sacrifice. He used to cry, 'Give me a few men and women who are pure and selfless, and I shall shake the world!'<sup>12</sup> Swamiji thought it would not be *enough* for Indian women to attain high academic qualifications. At least some of them must be endowed with wonderful intellect and wisdom who are equals of their western counterparts. When that will happen, the problems of women will be solved by women themselves. They will not require guidance from any man. In the West Swamiji found a few women of genius like Sister Christine and Sister Nivedita whom he trained painstakingly to carry out the initial work.

Swamiji planned a women's monastery which would be situated on the eastern bank of the Ganges. The monastery would build the character of women. What kind of women would the monastery produce? Women endowed with austerity, purity, self-control, self-sacrifice, service, and the power of endurance. He declared: 'All attempts must be based upon the ideal of Sītā, Sītā, purer than purity, chaster than chastity, all patience, all suffering, the ideal of Indian womanhood.'<sup>13</sup> Whenever he spoke of Sītā, he would be overwhelmed with a surge of emotion. 'We are all children of Mother Sītā!' he would exclaim.

I am *inclined* to believe, while speaking of Sītā, Swamiji really meant the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, whose very nature was purity, who in recent times embodied all the Divine qualities of Sītā. Swamiji had so much reverence for Sri Sarada Devi that he would repeatedly sprinkle Ganges water on his body to purify himself when going across the river to see her. Again, only after receiving her permission and blessings did he decide to go to the West. Whenever Swamiji saw the Holy Mother, he would prostrate himself before her.

To Swamiji, Sarada Devi was not merely his guru's wife. Instead, he saw her as the embodiment of the Divine Mother, the living Durgā. This was not just a matter of belief or transient emotion. He really saw her divinity. In a memorable letter to Swami Shivananda, one of his brother-disciples, Swami Vivekananda said: 'You have not yet understood the wonderful significance of Mother's life—none of you.... To me, Mother's grace is a hundred thousand times more valuable than Fa-

11 Ibid., p.195-6.

12 Ibid., p.209.

13 Ibid., p.204.



ther's.... Please pardon me, I am a little bigoted here, as regards Mother.'<sup>14</sup>

Swamiji continues: 'Without the grace of Shakti nothing is to be accomplished. What do I find in America and Europe?—the worship of Shakti, the worship of Power.'<sup>15</sup> Holy Mother, Swamiji writes, 'has been born to revive that wonderful Shakti in India; and making her the nucleus, once more will Gārgis and Maitreyis be born into the world.... I am coming to understand things clearer every day, my insight is opening out more and more. Hence we must first build a Math for Mother. First Mother and Mother's daughters, then Father and Father's sons—can you understand this?'<sup>16</sup>

What are those ideals that were reflected in the character of Sītā-in-Sarada's form? Purity, motherhood, sweetness, forbearance, perseverance, selflessness, loyalty to husband, service, universal love, and what not. And Swamiji wanted these ideals developed in women, especially the women of India. Besides, he wanted them to have the vigour and patriotism found in the renowned Queen of Jhansi, Lakshmibai, and the Rajput Queen, Padmini. While in the West, he used to narrate very often to his disciples the stories of their heroism. He did not like women to have a lowly, begging, imploring attitude. Thus, like a master sculptor, Swamiji chiselled out a wonderfully divine model for woman. Sister Christine compared his craftsmanship with the fascinating artistry of Michael Angelo.

Although Swamiji emphasized purity and self-control, he did not condemn the life of the householder. In harmony with

the teachings of the ancient Śāstras and his own Master, Sri Ramakrishna, he acknowledged the fact that all do not have the same capacity for spiritual life. But if the life of the householder is based on the ideals of purity and morality, it will work for the good of society. In such households great spiritual characters will be formed. Society will be blessed by the birth of great men and women.

Remembering these words of Swamiji, Sister Nivedita remarked in her book, *The Master As I Saw Him*, 'This realisation was the crown of his philosophy.'<sup>17</sup>

Though Swamiji resented child-marriage, he did not always agree with social reformers. For this reason some people criticized him, not understanding his position. The point is that Swamiji did not believe in destructive methods; he was against the use of force in combating social evils. He thought, when economic pressure will come, things will change automatically. But he never wanted anyone to be bound by society or anything else. Hence, Sister Nivedita wrote, Swamiji 'held with unfaltering strength, that the freedom to refrain from marriage, if she wished, ought to be considered as a natural right of woman.'<sup>18</sup>

In the West Swamiji mixed freely with many women. Some he regarded as 'mothers', some as 'sisters', some as 'daughters', and some as 'friends'. They helped him a great deal in his work. In a letter to Mr Manmatha Nath Bhattacharya, Swamiji writes: 'I make all of them call me "father" or "brother". I don't allow them to come near me

14 *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol.VII, p.482.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Sister Nivedita, op. cit., p.327.

18 Ibid., p.274.



with any other feeling....<sup>19</sup> It must be understood, however, that this fear was not of woman, but of 'temptation'.<sup>20</sup> Swamiji did not fear women; he only feared sensuality.

To sum up then,

- 1) Swamiji did not acknowledge any basic difference between men and women.
- 2) He saw the Divine Mother in every woman.
- 3) He had boundless confidence in and respect for women.
- 4) He modelled for women a character founded on the ideal of Sitā

and Sri Sarada Devi that breathed purity, sweetness, renunciation, forbearance, service, unselfishness, divine love, power, and supreme majesty.

Swami Vivekananda's attitude towards women is perfectly revealed in that model. We, who take pride in being followers of Vivekananda, must see that our lives and characters conform to this model. If our lives thus conform to the ideal, good. If not, we must struggle to develop those qualities which go to make up that perfect model. For that is the only way to manifest the Divinity already within us all.

19 *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol.VII, p.472.

20 Sister Nivedita, op. cit., p.267.

THE best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women. In ancient Greece there was absolutely no difference in the state of man and woman. The idea of perfect equality existed. No Hindu can be a priest until he is married, the idea being that a single man is only half a man, and imperfect. The idea of perfect womanhood is perfect independence. The central idea of the life of a modern Hindu lady is her chastity. The wife is the centre of a circle, the fixity of which depends upon her chastity.... The Hindu women are very spiritual and very religious, perhaps more so than any other women in the world. If we can preserve these beautiful characteristics and at the same time develop the intellects of our women, the Hindu woman of the future will be the ideal woman of the world.



## SCIENCE IN THE WEST AND THE EAST—THROUGH HISTORY

S. K. BAGCHI

*Mr S. K. Bagchi's lecture on the above subject is continued from the previous issue and concluded here.*

### PARLIAMENTARY REVOLUTION

With the advent of Renaissance, Reformation, and Scientific Revolution traditional views were being challenged in the seventeenth century and ideas of religious liberty, political equality, and individual freedom started growing. Between 1642-51 England had civil war and Charles the First was beheaded in 1649. After many vicissitudes in 1688 came the glorious Parliamentary Revolution with the final establishment of supremacy of Parliament over the monarchy and the inauguration of Constitutional Monarchy in England. This was the time when feudalism in Europe was breaking down and mercantile capitalism was growing and profound changes were coming in land management.

### SERFDOM AND GUILD SYSTEMS

By the beginning of the eighteenth century Serfdom and Guild Systems, the two obstacles to the mobility of workers, had been almost completely broken in England, and in France not until the French Revolution at the end of eighteenth century. Serfdom and Guild Systems were the

distinction of feudalism. By the sixteenth century cities had been differentiated from villages. Trade had become internationalized with exploration and discoveries. Mercantilism was established. Guild system gave way to 'Domestic System' where, to improve production, the merchants started supplying materials and capitals to craftsmen in villages and cities. This system had spread to Germany, and to France later. Gradually division of labour appeared. After 1750 the Domestic System started giving way to the Factory System.

### AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION

Far-reaching changes were also taking place in the agricultural management which increased food production and animal husbandry substantially. At the end of the sixteenth century Europe had 1000-year-old 'Open field system' with two-field system having crop in one field and keeping the other fallow. By the end of the eighteenth century 'Enclosure System' and 'Four-field system' got established in England. New crops like alfalfa, grass, clover, roots like turnip were introduced. This brought in revolution in animal husbandry, the pivot of agricul-



tural revolution. Seed drill, horse hoeing, threshing mill, winnower or corn dresser, etc. were introduced by the end of the eighteenth century. All these considerably increased food production which made it possible to sustain a large population.

#### INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION (1760-1830)

The stage is now ready for the Industrial Revolution to set in. The impact of Industrial Revolution was first felt in the textile industry. Prior to 1760 the machinery used in textile industry was as simple as in India. By 1750 English iron industry was in decline because of paucity of charcoal. Though the process for use of coke for making Iron was discovered by Abraham Derby in 1709 it was not introduced. Similarly many of the technological inventions made prior to 1760 like John Kay's Flying Shuttle discovered in 1733 or Wyatt's patent of Roller Spinning Machine in 1738 were not utilized. The reason was lack of capital. W. Cunningham, an authority of English industrial history, commented, 'The introduction of expensive implements and processes involve a large outlay; it is not worthwhile for any man, however energetic, to make the attempt, unless he has a considerable command of capital, and access to large markets. In eighteenth century these conditions were more and more realised.' The increase of trade, commerce, colonization, slave trade, and the plunder of colonies made accumulation of capital possible. All historical conditions were ripe in England for the advent of Industrial Revolution. Karl Marx has shown that the primitive accumulation of capital came in England from the silver from Mexico, slave trade from Africa, and plunder of India. After the battle of Plassey in 1757 and the establishment of supremacy of British Power in India the Bengal plunder

started arriving in England and the effect was almost instantaneous. Brook Adams in his *Laws of Civilisation & Decay* writes: 'Edmund Burke said when he came to England in 1750 there were only 12 bankers shop in the provinces, though in 1790 they were in every market town.' Whereas in 1754, 60 years after the establishment of the Bank of England, the minimum note in circulation was £20, by 1759 the bank issued £15 notes showing that money had become mobile. Technological innovations got introduced in industry in rapid succession. Flying Shuttle was introduced in 1760. It quickened weaving. Hargreaves invented Spinning Jenny in 1764 to spin threads. James Watt matured the steam engine in 1768 which powered the Industrial Revolution. Richard Arkwright invented Water Frame in 1769. It improved the quality of thread. Samuel Crompton contrived the Spinning Mule joining Spinning Jenny and Water Frame in 1776. In 1785 Dr Edmund Cartwright patented Power Loom, coke replaced charcoal in Blast Furnace by the end of the eighteenth century. Dr Samuel Johnson was moved to state that 'The age was running mad after innovation'. Mercantile capitalism gave place to free trade capitalism.

#### INDIAN SCIENTIFIC HERITAGE AND ITS DOWNFALL

I shall now endeavour to relate in very brief India's contribution to science. But I shall try to discuss the causes for the downfall of Indian scientific heritage in a little more detail. If we look at the town planning of the first urban cities of Harappan civilization we find that it was at least 1000 years ahead of contemporaneous Egyptian or Sumerian civilizations. In linguistic studies India made tremendous advances. Out of six Vedāṅgas—*śikṣā* (phonetics), *kalpa* (prepa-



ration of sacrificial altar), *vyākaraṇa* (grammar), *nirukta* (etymology), *chandas* (metrics), and *jyotiṣa* (astronomy and astrology)—four relate to linguistics. Pāṇini codified the rules in the fourth century B.C. in *Pāṇinīya Śikṣā*. Pāṇini's *kāraṇa* and 'root' theory are being discussed today.

India gave to the western world the concept of zero, the numerals, and the decimal place system. During al Mamun's reign (ninth century A.D.) Indian numerals started being used in the Islamic world which transmitted to Europe through Leonardo Fibonacci in the thirteenth century. It came to be known as Hindu-Arabic numerals. In *Śulva-Sūtra*, dating back to about sixth century B.C., the Pythagorean theorem has been very clearly enunciated.

Ayurvedic medicine and surgery as enumerated in *Caraka* and *Suśruta* show India's advances in medicine. *Suśruta* describes eye operation, plastic surgery, and details of dissection of human body.

In metallurgy India has given to the world the process of steel and zinc smelting. Crucible steel, known as 'Wootz' steel, was used for making Damascan sword. It was a small-scale industry in the Deccan. Huge slag-heaps of crucible steel exist in different villages in Nizamabad and other districts of Andhra Pradesh and also in Karnataka. Zinc smelting furnaces of the sixteenth century have been discovered in Zawar in Rajasthan. There are ancient mines dating back to 2000 years from today. The rustless Iron Pillar at Kutub Minar, Delhi, iron beams at Konarak and Dhar bear witness to our metallurgical skill in ancient India. There is a large body of chemical treatises which describe the various metallurgical processes. The still extant masonry

observatories at Delhi and Jaipur of the eighteenth century by Swai Jai Singh II show India's activities in astronomical observation. Āryabhata, Bhāskara, and many others made significant contributions in astronomy and mathematics. I am not going to deal in detail with those aspects.

#### DECAY OF INDIAN SCIENCES

The questions are often asked as to why Indian science decayed and we lagged behind Europe. It was Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray who first pointed out the cause of the decay of Indian science in his famous book *History of Hindu Chemistry*. He suggested that the alienation of mental labour from physical labour was the root cause for the downfall of Indian science. Experiments and observations constitute the fundamental postulates of science. The importance that our ancient works of science laid on experiments will be clear if I quote from medieval work of Indian chemistry, namely *Rasendra-cintāmaṇi* by Rāmacandra of thirteenth or fourteenth century A.D. Rāmacandra writes in his book: 'That which I have heard of learned men and have read in the Sastra-s but have not been able to verify by experiment I have discarded. On the other hand those operations which I have, according to the directions of my sage teachers, been able to perform with my own hands—those alone I am committing to writing. Those are to be regarded as real teachers who can verify by experiments what they teach—those are to be regarded as laudable disciples who can perform what they have learned—teachers and pupils, other than these are mere actors on the stage.' This was the experimental philosophy of

1 Cited in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *History of Science and Technology in Ancient India—The Beginnings*, Calcutta, 1986, pp. 7-8.



our sciences in the past. But P. C. Ray comments: 'The drift of Manu and of the later Puranas is in the direction of glorifying the priestly class, which set up most arrogant and outrageous pretensions. According to Susrūta, the dissection of dead bodies is a *sine qua non* to the student of surgery and this high authority lays particular stress on knowledge gained from experiment and observation. But Manu would have none of it. The very touch of a corpse, according to Manu, is enough to bring contamination to the sacred person of Brahmin. Thus we find that shortly after the time of Vagbhata, the handling of a lancet was discouraged and Anatomy and Surgery fell into disuse and became to all intents and purposes lost sciences to the Hindus....

'The arts being thus relegated to the low castes and the professions made hereditary, a certain degree of fineness, delicacy and deftness in manipulation was no doubt secured but this was done at a terrible cost. The intellectual portion of the community being thus withdrawn from active participation in the arts, the how and why of phenomena—the coordination of cause and effect—were lost sight of—the spirit of enquiry gradually died out among a nation naturally prone to speculation and metaphysical subtleties and India for once bade adieu to experimental and inductive sciences. Her soil was rendered morally unfit for the birth of a Boyle, a Des Cartes or a Newton and her very name was all but expunged from the map of the scientific world.'<sup>2</sup>

The other reason that P. C. Ray emphasizes is the hold that Śāṅkara's philosophy of Māyāvāda had on the minds of Brahmins and the intelligentsia. P. C.

Ray says: 'The Vedānta philosophy, as modified and expanded by Saṃkara, which teaches the unreality of the material world, is also to a large extent responsible for bringing the study of physical science into disrepute. Saṃkara is unsparing in his strictures on Kanada and his system. One or two extracts from Saṃkara's Commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, will make the point clear: [Observed Saṃkara] "It thus appears that the atomic doctrine is supported by very weak arguments only, is opposed to those scriptural passages which declare the Lord to be the general cause, and is not accepted by any of the authorities taking their stand on scripture, such as Manu and others. Hence it is to be altogether disregarded by highminded men who have a regard for their own spiritual welfare."<sup>3</sup>

To this P. C. Ray adds: 'Among a people ridden by caste and hide-bound by the authorities and injunctions of the Vedas, Puranas, and Smṛtis and having their intellect thus cramped and paralysed, no Boyle could arise....'<sup>4</sup>

It is a pity that in our school education today we have banished experimentation. Children of most schools in India hardly get any opportunity to learn through observation of nature and nature's processes. We are living in a difficult world today. A thinker in the beginning of this century wrote that the twentieth century was the most disastrous century that the world had ever seen and that a contemporary of ours who wanted peace and rest had chosen a very bad time to be born. History is a great teacher of prudence and not of principles. It is high time to learn from the lessons of history and try to change this world.

2 Cited in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

3 Cited in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

4 Cited in Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, op. cit., p. 15.



## TALKS AND DISCOURSES

### Not to stay put at a place

The woodcutter complied with the counsel of the wise man and did not stop at the sandalwood forest. He moved on and on deeper into the forest and explored mines of silver and gold and precious stones. Sri Ramakrishna through this parable, emphasizes that the life of a seeker of truth is ever a quest—a ceaseless search for illumination, for merger with the Reality Absolute. He would advise to proceed with 'līlā' (the gross, material, and relative plane) on to 'Nitya' (the subtle, transcendental plane). Each step of a staircase leads one higher and higher up to the top of the mansion. And once on the roof, all diversities, all multiplicity of names and forms of the phenomenal world, everything, big or small, high or low, are wiped out from the view. One discovers then the vastness of the supersensuous One Existence, the only Reality, Brahman, according to the Vedantists.

Who is a guru? He is Brahman, he is Vishnu and Shiva, he is everything, a person who has savoured Eternal Bliss. The guru says, it is Rāma that you see everything before you. A dog with a piece of bread is Rāma Himself and the devotee entreats the dog to wait a little till the devotee pours some ghee on the bread to make it more delicious. *Guroḥ Kṛpāvaśāt pārtha labhya ātmā na samśayaḥ*. Realization of the Ātman is possible through guru's grace. 'We shall crush the stars to atoms, and unhinge the universe,' wrote Vivekananda to put courage into the sagging heart of his brother disciples.

Īśvara has no existence for a Vedantist.

He is not real, just a creation of a devotee. He is as much unreal as the sense-world. 'The difference between Īśvara and the ordinary man is that the former, though associated with *Māyā*, is not bound by its fetters, whereas the latter is its slave. Īśvara is the highest manifestation of Brahman in the phenomenal universe.' He regulates the mentation of mortals, the finite beings. Avatar is '*bhaktānurodhāt sākārah*'. God takes a concrete material form to please His devotees. Divine incarnations are representatives of God on earth, '*anugrahāya bhaktānam*', out of pity for the devotees. Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares in the *Gītā* about divine incarnations how and when God assumes human forms, when God descends on the earth. 'When goodness grows weak, / When evil increases, / I make myself a body.'

Sri Ramakrishna would explain saying: An avatar is like the beneficent, soothing morning sun and not the glaring midday sun that blinds. Through an incarnation, we have a faint view of God. He is like the tiny aperture in a wall which grants a vision of the vast simmering expanse rolling down to the horizon. When we look at these god-men we gather an idea, 'have a little perception of what God might be like. They are gods among men who come down to earth to put our mortal lives on an even keel, to save us when we are at the crossroads of spiritual crisis. How to distinguish them from others? The only criterion is their infinite compassion, which no dyke can hold. Do we remember what Swamiji said to Hari Bhai (Swami Turiyananda) when they met at the Abu Road Station before he left for America? My heart has grown much larger.'

\* Based on discourses by Swami Lokeswarananda on *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta* in June 1991.



## Two Options: Fight or Flight

How to ward off rebirth? Only he can who identifies himself with Brahman in the cave of *buddhi*. He is a *jīvanmukta* (liberated even when alive) like Janaka, the king of Mithilā, who wielded two swords—one of *jñāna* and the other of *karma*. Janaka was a *Brahmaniṣṭha*, established in Brahman and absolutely free from all bondage. Only a Janaka could say the burning of Mithilā, his capital, was of little concern to him. The manifold world was fun, the Divine Mother's play. He was privileged in realizing in his life the illumination that *Māyā* was the manifestation of Brahman, the Absolute.

Of the two options open to an aspirant one is the rationalistic approach. The phenomenal world is changing, changing every moment without cease. We are in a dream, moving and having our being in a world of 'incongruous nonsense, a mass of incongruity passing before us'. It is *Māyā*, according to the Vedāntists, which distorts our vision about the only Reality, the One Existence which is Brahman. The method of Advaita is not to shy away from this world of unreal, relative existence but to put up a bold front and hold the devil by the scruff of the neck. It is fight to the last ditch. Vivekananda says, 'Think always, "I am Brahman." Every other thought must be cast aside as weakening. Cast aside every thought that says that you are men or women. Let body go, and mind go, and gods go, and ghosts go. Let everything go but that One Existence.'

We have to choose either of the two ways. One is to discriminate between the Real and the non-Real—not this, not this—whetting up the reasoning faculty till Truth reveals itself. It is the tool employed

by men of knowledge, the *jñānīs*. The other path is the way of surrender, total commitment to the Divine Will. How far can reason go? Not very far. Reason has been described as *ignis fatuus* of the mind that may lead to disaster. He eschews *bhakta-bhagavān* relationship. He is after *nirvikalpa samādhi* (contentless consciousness), after the Absolute, which is beyond mind and speech, for mergence in Brahman. Vivekananda was God's 'chosen' who could not be missed in a crowd. He was 'the man marked with the stamp of the power to command. A traveller who crossed his path in the Himalayas without knowing who he was, stopped in amazement, and cried, "Shiva!..."' The rationalistic bent of Naren's mind was to Sri Ramakrishna the manifestation of Shivaic power, which would finally overcome all illusion. He said, 'Look, look, what power of penetration! He is a raging fire consuming all impurities. Mahāmāyā Herself cannot come nearer to him than ten feet! She is held back by the glory She has imparted to him.'

On the contrary, Sri Ramakrishna was infinitely more master than Vivekananda in the realm of intellect. Later Vivekananda was to say of Ramakrishna, 'Outwardly he was all Bhakta, but inwardly all jñani.... I am the exact opposite.'

The *bhakta* prays, 'He who at the beginning of creation projected Brahṁā (i.e. the universal consciousness), and who delivered the Vedas unto him—seeking liberation I go for refuge unto that Effulgent One, whose light turns the understanding towards the Ātman.' The *bhakta* does not reject *Māyā*. He worships Mahāmāyā (the Great Illusion). He gives himself to Her and prays, 'Mother, get out of my way! Only so can I hope to realize Brahman.' This is flight—surrender and fight of the *jñānī*.\*

\*Based on discourses by Swami Lokeshwarananda on *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* in June 1991.



## Continence as a Discipline for Self-Knowledge

The Self is a dam that keeps the worlds in their proper places and makes them do their assigned roles. There is no transgression of the limits set to them, each doing its duty as prescribed. The Self is the Lord ruling over the worlds exercising the laws of cause and effect. These laws are rigidly enforced to offset confusion and disaster. We the embodied souls are slaves to evil deeds resulting in infinite pain and suffering, grief and sorrow. Blindness and other bodily infirmities are effects of sin. They inexorably happen to them who have bodies which are material, perishable, and subject to decay and death. The Self is pure spirit beyond the reach of these physical incapacities. The body imposes limitations but the Supreme Self—'I'—is not the body. The ignorance that veils the inner Self in me has to be conquered by constant affirmation of the scriptural injunction: *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman).

The question arises: How to know my Self? How to attain Brahma-loka? That world of infinite bliss is accessible to only those who practise continence. They are *kāmacaras*, free from bondage whatsoever, free to act as they please in all the worlds. Nothing shackles them.

The Self is not conditioned by anything. With the realization of the Self, reaching the dam, a sightless person regains his sight, sombre night becomes day of bright colours. This dam is out of bounds for all evil things. Afflictions of body cannot reach the periphery of the dam.

Swami Turiyananda had vicious carbuncles on his back. He suffered terribly but would not allow himself to be put

under an anaesthetic before the surgeon would use his scalpel. By sheer will force, he would withdraw his mind from the body. He as knower of Brahman could raise his mind to the transcendental plane. He would quote from the *Gītā* (VI.22): *Yasminsthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate* (wherein established he is not shaken even by the heaviest sorrow). Along with it the Swami would refer to Acārya Śaṅkara's commentary: *Śāstra-sampāta-janitenāpi duḥkhena na vicālyate* (one would not be perturbed with grief even if weapon was applied to his body). He was immersed in Brahman—*sthitaprajña* man of steady wisdom. Swami Shivananda, the second abbot of the Ramakrishna Order, could dissociate himself from the ailments afflicting his decaying, worn-out body. The radiant glow of his face was deceptive. If any devotee while paying respects to him in the morning would ask how he felt, he would reply with a smile that he was fine. Few would have an inkling of his breathing troubles that robbed him of his sleep the night before.

'The yogi established in the bliss of Brahman has no body-consciousness.' In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, Yama, God of Death, says: 'Let a man separate Him from his body with steadiness as one separates the tender stalk from a blade of grass. Let him know that Self as the Bright, as the Immortal—yea, as the Bright, as the Immortal.'

Gandhiji's weekly vow of silence was practice of continence. It is through continence that one attains Self-knowledge. Continence has been equated with sacrifice. Through *yajña* or sacrifice one attains purity of mind and one with a pure mind realizes Self-knowledge. So continence has been prescribed as a form of spiritual discipline.\*

\*Based on discourses (Tarapada Chaudhuri Lectures) by Swami Lokeshwarananda on the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* in June 1991.



### Pundit Narayan Sastri Initiated into Sannyasa by Sri Ramakrishna

Some of the learned aspirants who came to the Master [Śrī Ramakrishna] were initiated by him, some into the practice of mantras and some even into sannyasa. Pundit Narayan Sastri was one of them. The pundit lived with his teachers like the orthodox *brahmacārins* of ancient days, and studied various Śāstras continuously for twenty-five years. He had always a strong desire to have equal knowledge of, and mastery over, all the six *darśanas* (philosophies), and lived with different teachers at Kāśī and other places in the north-western part of India and had complete mastery of five of them. But unless he studied also Nyāya, the sixth of them, under its eminent exponents at Navadvīpa in Bengal, he could not claim to have complete mastery over all the *darśanas*. He had, therefore, come to the eastern part of the country about eight years before he visited the Master at Dakshineswar. For seven years he lived at Navadvīpa to complete his studies in the Nyāya philosophy, and having done so, was ready to go home. Perhaps he entertained doubts whether he would be able to visit these parts of the country over again. So he came to see Calcutta, and among the places he visited there was Dakshineswar, where he had the privilege of meeting the Master.

Sastriji had read about the seven planes spoken of in the Vedānta. He knew from his study of the scriptures that, as soon as the mind ascended to higher and higher planes of consciousness, there came wonderful experiences and visions followed at last by the *nirvikalpa samādhi*. And it was in that state that

man got merged in the immediate experience of the reality of Brahman, the indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss itself, and that the delusion of the world clinging to him for ages without beginning, vanished altogether. He saw that the Master had the immediate knowledge of what Sastriji merely had read about in the books and got by heart. He found that he himself merely uttered words like *samādhi* and immediate knowledge, while the Master was actually experiencing these states day and night. Sastriji thought, 'Ah, how wonderful! Where else shall I have such a person to teach and explain the hidden meanings of the Śāstras? This opportunity must not be missed. The means of immediate knowledge of Brahman must be learnt from him at any cost. Life is uncertain indeed. Who knows when this body will come to an end? Shall I die before attaining right knowledge? That should not be. At least one sincere effort to realize God must be made. Away with the thought of home and all that for the present!'

One day he happened to meet the Master in a secluded place, took that opportunity to express the desire of his heart to be initiated into sannyasa, and pressed his request tenaciously on the Master. The Master agreed on account of his eagerness and initiated him on an auspicious day. After that Sastriji left the Kālī temple. He informed the Master of his earnest desire to stay at Vasishtashrama and practise strenuous *sādhana* for the realization of Brahman till success attended on his efforts. Dissolved in tears, he asked for the Master's blessings, worshipped his feet, and left Dakshineswar behind for ever.\*

\*Based on discourses by Swami Rasajnananda on *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* in June 1991.



## The Religion of the Future

In the old Upanishads we find sublime poetry; their authors were poets. Plato says inspiration comes to people through poetry, and it seems as if these ancient rishis, seers of Truth, were raised above humanity to show these truths through poetry. They never preached, nor philosophized, nor wrote. Music came out of their hearts. In Buddha we had the great, universal heart and infinite patience, making religion practical and bringing it to everyone's door. In Shankaracharya we saw tremendous intellectual power, throwing the scorching light of reason upon everything. We want today that bright sun of intellectuality joined with the heart of Buddha, the wonderful infinite heart of Love and mercy. This union will give us the highest philosophy. Science and religion will meet and shake hands. Poetry and philosophy will become friends. This will be the religion of the future, and if we can work it out, we may be sure that it will be for all times and peoples. This is the one way that will prove acceptable to modern science. The Hindu nation proceeded through the study of mind, through metaphysics and logic. The European nations start from external nature, and now they too are coming to the same results.

The best and the greatest men that have been born in the world have worked with the high impersonal idea. It is the Man who said, 'I and my Father are One,' whose power has descended unto millions. For thousands of years it has worked for good. And we know the same Man, because he was a non-dualist, was merciful to others. To the masses who could not conceive of anything higher

than a Personal God, he said, 'Pray to your Father in heaven.' To others who could grasp a higher idea, he said, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches,' but to his disciples to whom he revealed himself more fully, he proclaimed the highest truth, 'I and my Father are One.'

It was the great Buddha, who never cared for the dualist gods, and who has been called an atheist and materialist, who yet was ready to give up his body for a poor goat. That Man set in motion the highest moral ideas any nation can have. Whenever there is a moral code, it is ray of light from that Man. We cannot force the great hearts of the world into narrow limits, and keep them there, especially at this time in the history of humanity when there is a degree of intellectual development such as was never dreamed of even a hundred years ago, when a wave of scientific knowledge has arisen which nobody would have dreamed of. By trying to force people into narrow limits you degrade them into animals and unthinking masses. You kill their moral life. What is now wanted is a combination of the greatest heart with the highest intellectuality, of infinite love with infinite knowledge. The Vedantist gives no other attributes to God except these three—that He is Infinite Existence, Infinite Knowledge, and Infinite Bliss, and he regards these three as One. Existence without knowledge and love cannot be; knowledge without love and love without knowledge cannot be. What we want is the harmony of Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss Infinite. For that is our goal. We want harmony, not one-sided development. And it is possible to have the intellect of a Shankara with the heart of a Buddha. Let us all struggle to attain to that blessed combination.\*

\*Based on discourses by Swami Rasajnananda on Swami Vivekananda's *Jñāna-Yoga* in June 1991.



### The Way to Devotion (continued)

This *kīrtana*, the singing of the Divine Name and His glories, has an added advantage over other means of purification in this that it can be pursued along with all worldly activities. One need not leave his hearth and home to take the Name because those who spend their hours of life in talking about Him do no longer find their homes as prison-houses that hold them in bondage (*na madvārtāyātayāmānām na bandhāya grhā matāh*). In a beautiful verse it is illustrated how the *gopīs* without neglecting any household duty whatsoever go on singing the holy Name. All actions being thus woven around the Divine Name, work automatically turns into worship without any effort. Moreover, even the actions themselves attain their fruition through the power of the Divine Name because it fills up all gaps, heals all defects (*sarvaṁ karoti nīśchidram*) that come in the way of every action through time, space, or other lapses (*mantratastantratas chidram deśakālārhavastutaḥ*). Such is the efficacy of *nāmasaṁkīrtanam*, the singing of the holy Name of the Lord, which is the second step towards the attainment of devotion.

The gift of speech, which is a privilege of man, really opens the door to liberation in so far as it affords the opportunity to utter the Divine Name. He who fails to take advantage of it really turns this wonderful faculty of speech utterly barren and fruitless (*vandhyāṁ giram*). Especially the dark age of *Kali*, which is otherwise so full of deficiencies, has this one great excellence that only by singing the glories of God one is freed from all attachments and attains the Supreme. What is attained by *dhyāna* or meditation in the *Satyayuga* or by performing sacrifices in *Tretā* or

by service in *Dvāpara* is easily obtained through the singing of Hari in *Kali*. They are, therefore, blessed and fortunate who, in this dark age, remember themselves as well as make others remember the Divine Name.

The glories of God that are sung through His Name are so innumerable that one can even hope to count all the atoms of the dust of the earth but not the heroic deeds of *Viṣṇu*, the all-comprehensive reality that sustains the entire creation. Neither the Creator himself, *Brahmā*, nor the great sages know the end of His powers. The great God *Ananta* with his thousand heads goes on singing His praise but even now has not been able to finish recounting all the deeds of glory of His many incarnations (*adhunāpi samavasyati nāśya pāram*).

While concluding this topic of *kīrtana*, one is reminded that the efficacy of words or speech lies only in their being mixed or joined with the auspicious qualities, deeds and birth of the Lord (*sumanḡalaiḥ guṇakarmajaṇmabhiḥ vimiśrāḥ*) because only then they animate, adorn, and purify the world (*prāṇanti śumbhanti punanti vai jagat*) and those which are bereft of them are like mere adornments on a dead body (*śavaśobhanā matāh*). Who will, therefore, cease from such singing (*kīrtana*) which bestows so much of benefit on the singer, practically without any exertion on his part? It is life-giving, uplifting, and ennobling, which carries one at once beyond the sphere of *guṇas* and leads to the attainment of supreme devotion to Him, who is the refuge of the highest souls (*bhaktīm parām parama-hamsagatau labheta*). *Kīrtana* or singing of the Divine Name is thus an indispensable second step towards the attainment of devotion.\*

\*Based on discourses (R. K. Bhuwalka Lectures) by Dr Govinda Gopa! Mukherjee on *Bhakti-ratnāvalī* in June 1991.



## Sāṃkhya Epistemology

An important problem of epistemology is to determine the number of independent 'sources' of knowledge. By 'sources' is meant 'instrumental causes'. Sāṃkhya admits three independent instrumental causes of true belief. The term '*pramā*' means in Indian philosophy in general only true belief. In western philosophy it is usual to distinguish between true belief and knowledge which is often defined as justified true belief. In Indian philosophy this distinction is not made. For example in Nyāya, the term '*pramā*' is defined as cognition having that as a mode in that-possessor (*tad-vatī tat-prakāraṇam jñānam pramā*). This definition, which is accepted in all Indian systems, makes *pramā* the same as true belief.

Different Indian philosophical systems admit different independent means of *pramā*. Sāṃkhya, as has been already stated, admits three such sources—perception, inference, and verbal testimony. The point is that ontology is determined by the sources of true cognition admitted in a system. Thus in Cārvāka philosophy perception is regarded as the only means of true cognition; hence reality is that which is the object of perception. Cārvāka cannot accept any reality which is imperceptible. So the Sāṃkhya philosophers regard the question of the number of independent means of true cognition as very important for determining the nature of reality.

Perception is the ascertainment of objects in sense-contact. As Sāṃkhya holds that pure consciousness is above all change, different forms of true cognition cannot, therefore, be forms of pure consciousness. They are all functions of

the *buddhi* which is material in nature. According to Sāṃkhya philosophers, all cognitions involve modes of the *buddhi*, which represent external objects. As there cannot be any direct relation between consciousness and objects, there must be something to mediate between them. This mediating *tattva* is the *buddhi*. So *buddhi* is that which has modes, i.e. copies of objects. Perception is, therefore, a function of the *buddhi* which receives copies of objects from the sense-organs. There is, therefore, no perception which is not caused by the sense-organs.

Here the problem is to determine the instrumental cause of perceptual awareness. The *buddhi* being material cannot be conscious; consciousness is only 'reflected' in some sense (to be explained later) in the *buddhi*, which thus only appears to be conscious. But, then, there are two aspects of the *buddhi*—the mode and the borrowed light of consciousness. Perception in the sense of perceptual awareness is caused by the modes, i.e. copies of objects received from the sense-organs. It is, therefore, the mode of the *buddhi* which is the instrumental cause of the awareness.

This theory is radically different from the Nyāya theory of the instrumental cause of perceptual awareness. According to Nyāya it is the sense-organ which is the instrumental cause of perception. Sāṃkhya philosophers do not accept this theory, for sense-organs produce even illusory perceptions sometimes, and illusory perceptions are not *pramā*, so the sense-organs cannot be regarded as *pramāṇa*, for they also produce *apramā*. The Sāṃkhya theory is free from this defect.\*

\*Based on discourses (Tarapada Chaudhuri Lectures) by Professor Sibajiban Bhattacharyya on *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* in June 1991.



## SPECTRUM

To say that for the sake of men they have willed to set in order the glorious nature of the world and therefore it is meet to praise the work of the gods is all sheer folly. For what advantage can our gratitude bestow on immortal and blessed beings, that for our sakes they should take in hand to administer aught? And what novel incident should have induced them hitherto at rest so long after to desire to change their former life?

The nature of things has by no means been made for us by divine power: so great are the defects with which it is encumbered. Nature free at once and rid of lords is seen to do all things spontaneously without the meddling of the gods.<sup>1</sup>

The religion of man has neither temples, nor altars, nor rites, and is confined to the purely internal cult of the supreme God and the eternal obligations of morality, the true theism, the religion of the Gospel pure and simple. By means of this holy, sublime, and real religion all men, being children of one God, recognise one another as brothers, and the society that unites them is not dissolved even at death. Only one great difficulty: a society of true Christians would not be a society of men. Christianity as a religion is entirely spiritual, occupied solely with heavenly things; the country of the Christian is not of this world. The essential thing is to get to heaven.

The dogmas of civil religion ought to be few, simple, and exactly worded, without explanation or commentary. The existence of a mighty, intelligent and beneficent Divinity, possessed of foresight and providence, the life to come, the happiness of the just, the punishment of

the wicked, the sanctity of the social contract and the laws: these are its positive dogmas. Its negative dogmas: I confine to one, intolerance.<sup>2</sup>

Scripture alone is a means for the knowledge of Brahman. That we must infer a causal agent competent to plan and construct the universe would be a conclusion altogether unjustified. There is no proof that the earth, oceans, &c, were created at one time by one creator. Effects are distinguished by difference of producers and of time of production. Individual beings acquire extraordinary powers in consequence of religious merit; and as through an eventual supreme degree of merit they may qualify themselves for producing extraordinary effects, we have no right to assume a highest soul of infinite merit, different from all individual souls. It is observed that things are destroyed in succession. And there is no reason why this production and destruction should not take place in a way agreeing with ordinary experience.<sup>3</sup>

It is the greatness of God by which this Brahma-wheel is made to turn. He is the one God, hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the self within all beings, watching over all works, dwelling in all beings, the witness, the perceiver, the only one, free from qualities. To a high-minded man, who feels the highest devotion for God, and for his Guru as for God, these truths will shine forth indeed.<sup>4</sup>

1) Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* II and V. (2) J. J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract* IV. 8. (3) Rāmānuja on *Vedāntasūtras* 1.1.3. (4) *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad* VI 1,11,23.



### Traditional Chinese Painting

THE FOLLOWING excerpts from an article entitled 'Characteristics of Traditional Chinese Painting' by Luo Haipo are reproduced from *Beijing Review*, June 10-16, 1991, Beijing 100 037.

Paintings in the world can basically be divided into two large categories, that is, Oriental and Western. Oriental painting includes mainly traditional Chinese painting, while Western is mainly oil painting. Traditional Chinese painting is distinct in its expression and forms its own unique style in the East and even in the world.

In its early period of development, religious figures were the subject of traditional Chinese painting. Mountains, rivers, flowers and birds appeared only in the background and did not occupy much space. They were later enlarged and gradually developed into independent styles.

The traditional Chinese painting is distinguished with its special painting tools and mounting methods. It is also unique in implication. For example, artists may "draw fish and no water, but still there are ripples." Qi Baishi painted his shrimps without water, yet one can still feel water from the movement of the shrimps.

Ink outlines are chiefly used in Chinese painting, then the shapes are filled in with colour. This makes the shapes clear and precise. An outstanding painter skillfully expresses a certain feeling through his figurative and vigorous outlines. The colour is simple and generalized and is applied to give liveliness and vividness.

In composition, Chinese painting adopts "random perspectives" or "moving perspectives." This is more flexible than "focus perspective" in that it puts subjects of varying time and space together perfectly.

For example, in the grand landscape painting *How Beautiful the Mountains and Rivers Are*, contemporary painters Fu Baoshi and Guan Shanyue combine all four seasons from the point of view of time, and, from the point of view of space, they combine scenes from the south of the Yangtze River, north China, the red sun over the East China Sea, and snow on the western border. This cannot be done by "focus perspective."

Paintings are based on a subject. Whereas in Western painting, only the signature of the artist and date are put in the corner, in Chinese painting, they are often not only written in a conspicuous place. The painting may include subject title, poems and seals. Poem, calligraphy and painting are merged to enrich the scope and depth of the art work.

As for calligraphy and painting during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and the Song Dynasty (960-1279), a number of scholars and officials in feudal China always expressed their personal ambitions by using symbols of mountains, rivers, flowers and birds. They paid great attention to the cultivation of literature, calligraphy and the creation of ideas in painting which was then called "scholar painting."

These are not the only art features of traditional Chinese painting. In addition, there are 32 methods of using the brush and 18 methods of using ink. By lending brush and ink to *xuan* paper, a high quality absorbent paper made in Xuan-cheng, Anhui Province, skillful painters of traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy can achieve endless techniques.

Chinese painting has been splendidly cultivated over several thousands of years. It is also the crystallization of the endless dedication of painters from past dynasties.



### **Mr Uma Shankar Dikshit Condolence Resolution on His Death**

Moved from the Chair, the Managing Committee of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture at its meeting on 27 June 1991 adopted the following resolution with the members present standing in silence:

Resolved that the Managing Committee learns with a deep sense of sorrow and loss about the death on 30 May 1991 of Mr Uma Shankar Dikshit, formerly Governor of West Bengal and President of the Managing Committee of the Institute. As President of the Managing Committee of the Institute from 1 April 1985 up to 9 August 1986, and even thereafter, Mr Dikshit took great interest in the welfare of the Institute and extended his ungrudging support to its cause with the State and Central Governments.

The Committee conveyed its condolence to the members of his family.

### **Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda**

The Institute celebrated the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda at a meeting on 16 March 1991 in the Vivekananda Hall. Swami Lokeshwarananda presided.

The first speaker was Mrs Mita Mazumdar, who spoke on 'Womanhood—in the Eyes of Swami Vivekananda' (see page 234).

Next Swami Shantarupananda spoke on the subject 'Swami Vivekananda and the World Today'. He said Vivekananda did not belong to any nation, but to all of us. Vivekananda could see the future of human evolution; seeing thus, he said 'Sudra-Yuga' would come, which we are finding now. The swami referred to the current happenings of the world and the modern problem: the Gulf War,

which had just ended leaving behind horrors and devastating effects. The swami pointed out that today there was a sort of imbalance between the human spirit and the development of science. Science had mitigated human sufferings, but science had its bad effects also. There was a need of revolution in the moral and ethical sense. The swami expressed the view that as we were facing crisis of faith and suffering from fear, the way to gain faith and remove fear was through religion. He said Swamiji's [Swami Vivekananda's] teaching was all directed to rationalism and universality.

His speech was followed by that of Miss Abhaya Das Gupta, Librarian of the Institute. She spoke on 'God and Man in Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy' (see page 168 in the June 1991 issue).

Dr R. B. Rybakov, Deputy Director, Institute of Oriental Studies, USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow, spoke on 'Legacy of Swami Vivekananda and Message of India'. He said the works of Vivekananda would prepare one for some new developments. Swamiji had shown how religion could be tested by modern science. Hinduism was enriched by the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Hinduism, according to Vivekananda, was based on some cosmic truths. The message of Swami Vivekananda showed the way out of the individual level. In Russia many were inspired by the teachings of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. The Russians needed man-making education, value orientation, and spiritual discipline.

A special address was given by Dr Vladimir A Rossov, Director, Roerich Museum, Izvara, USSR. He spoke to the following effect: I would like to talk to you on a sort of history concerning Vivekananda's way to Russia. At the end of the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century Swami



Vivekananda was preaching in America and in India, as you know; but at the same time, another brilliant Russian was living in Russia. His name was Mr Popov, very educated, well known to the intelligentsia of Russia. He had a beautiful wife, who was a chemist by speciality. She perished during her experimental work in a laboratory. Her husband Mr Popov was shocked by grief. He travelled around a year and visited many theosophical and spiritual centres in Europe. But he could not meet anywhere anybody who could help him in this situation. At last, he reached Italy where he was told to visit India and Indian yogis. He took a ticket on board on a ship and started towards India. Mr Popov arrived at Bombay port at the same time Swami Vivekananda returned from America. They crossed here in India. Mr Popov talked to Swamiji and asked him about his wife. We don't know what Swami Vivekananda replied to Mr Popov, but Mr Popov was glad, was calm. He didn't chase shadows this time because Swami Vivekananda might have said to him, 'Stand up and fight.' Mr Popov then came back to Russia after meeting Swami Vivekananda and from this time he started to live in his parent's village near Kiev and to translate the books of Swami Vivekananda. After some time in 1906, the first book of Swami Vivekananda was published in Russian language. Then came out one after another books like Philosophy of Vedānta, Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Jnana Yoga. This is just a glimpse of history, which I have from the letters of an academician. We don't know about the fate of Popov; he disappeared in 1919. None of his notes survived, but these translations of the works of Swami Vivekananda are still here. These books influenced deeply the cultural heritage of Russia and Russian Science, as well as a number of scientists and cultural people. It was a result of direct powerful impulse

of Swami Vivekananda. It is transmitted to us from generation to generation, and these ideals are living within our hearts.

Swami Lokeshwarananda said in his Presidential Address that Swami Vivekananda was confident about one truth: that he was a child of God. Sri Ramakrishna was the power behind Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna preached religion only, not Hinduism or any other religion. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, religion was a science of being and becoming. One must keep growing better, better, and better till one reached perfection. The purpose of religion was to pursue the path of perfection. Swami Vivekananda preached the divinity of man.

### International House

A number of distinguished persons stayed at the Institute's Guest House from January 1991 to April 1991. Among them were: Professor S. N. Mishra, Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi; Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, Musician, Pune; Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma, Musician, Bombay; Dr R. T. Vyas, Director, Oriental Institute, M. S. University of Baroda, Baroda; Dr M. Srimannarayana Murti, Director, Oriental Research Institute, S. V. University, Tirupati; Mr P. K. Mehta, University of California, Berkeley, U.S.A.; Dr J. L. Shaw, Department of Philosophy, Victoria University, New Zealand; Dr Crispin Bates, Lecturer, Department of History, University of Edinburgh, England; Dr Amrita M. Salm, Formerly Professor of Education, California State University, Los Angeles, U.S.A.; Dr Alexander M. Dubiansky, Head of the Department of Indian Philology, Moscow State University, Moscow, U.S.S.R.; Professor Boris A. Ivanov, Acting Head of the Department of Indian History, Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow University, Moscow, U.S.S.R.; and Mr Shen Qing Lin, Curator of Museum, Chinese Revolution Museum, Beijing, China.



## BOOK REVIEWS

*Quest for Excellence.* Edited and compiled by O. P. GHAI. Institute of Personal Development, L-10, Green Park Extension, New Delhi 110 016. 1990. pp. 154. Rs 100.00.

THIS BOOK has been described on the title-page as 'A golden treasury of prayers which have inspired people from all walks of life for over the past five thousand years' and it is an apt description. More things are wrought by prayers than this world dreams of and Alexis Carrel is perfectly justified when he asserts: 'Prayer is the most powerful form of energy that one can generate.' The trouble with mankind is that it is more concerned with the destructive force of nuclear energy than with the constructive force of spiritual energy, and Mr O. P. Ghai has done us a great service by compiling an excellent book on our quest for excellence. The inspiring excerpts in prose and verse cover a wide range from the Upanishads, Bible, Japji Sahib, and Al-Quran to Buddha, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore, Sri Satya Sai Baba, William Law, Lewis Mumford, Reinhold Niebuhr, Margaret E. Sangster, and numerous other writers, old and new, well-known and unknown.

One of the wisest of the inspiring passages comes from R. L. Stevenson: 'Give us the strength to encounter that which is to come, that we may be brave in peril, constant in tribulation, temperate in wrath, and in all changes of fortune, and down to the gates of death, loyal and loving one to another.' In another passage a fervent prayer is uttered from the depths of the soul: 'Slow me down, Lord! Ease the pounding of my heart by the quieting of my mind. Steady my hurried pace with the vision of the eternal reach of time.'

The editing of the book is not satisfactory. The arrangement of the passages is somewhat haphazard and the

details of the sources are not given. In many cases the source is not mentioned at all. There is no index. But the sincerity of the well-read compiler is crystal clear. His is a beautiful and useful anthology attractively produced.

VISVANATH CHATTERJEE

*Vedanta Jijnasa.* By SRI JNANANANDENDRA SARASWATI SWAMI. Published and edited by Manas Kumar Sanyal, 182, S. N. Roy Road, Calcutta 700 038. 1989. pp. 87. Rs 8.00.

THE BOOKLET is the product of the queries (*jijñāsā*) made by an inquisitive student of philosophy, on Advaita Vedānta propounded by Śaṅkarācārya. These queries or questions are very pertinent to those who are interested in this particular field of study. Answers are from one who is now in the ascetic order but was in his previous stage of life (*pūrvāśrama*) *Vedāntaśiromaṇi* and *Vedāntaviśārada*. As such, the author is entitled to speak with authority on Vedānta. In fact, some outstanding and important problems of Advaita Vedānta are illuminatingly but very briefly discussed here. The book is of immense help to the students of philosophy in general and to the students of Vedānta philosophy in particular. Chapter III is quite elucidating as it clarifies some basic Vedāntic concepts according to Śaṅkarācārya.

The booklet is not free from printing mistakes, e.g. *Mulaṇḍya-vadin's* say (there should be no apostrophe) and *ayam adhyāsaḥ* (should be *ayam adhyāsaḥ*) on p. 27. Sanskrit words in roman script with diacritical marks followed by translation would have benefited those who know neither Devanagari script nor Sanskrit. The publisher is to be thanked for the price which is within the reach of every interested reader.

PRADYOTKUMAR BANDYOPADHYAY



# CALENDAR FOR AUGUST 1991

	5.15	p.m.	Devotional Songs: In the Shrine from 5.15 p.m. to 6.15 p.m. every workday
1	5.30	"	<i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	"	Film: <i>Birāj Bou</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
2	5.30	"	<i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	"	<i>**Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
3	5.00	"	Vivekananda Study Circle
	6.00	"	<i>Vartamān Bhārat O Sri Ramakrishna</i> (Bengali): Swami Asaktananda/Swami Nirjarananda
5	5.30	"	<i>Bouddha Tirtha Sri Lanka</i> (Bengali): Swami Lokeswarananda
	6.15	"	<i>*Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
6	5.30	"	<i>**Sāmkhya-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	"	<i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
7	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
8	5.30	"	<i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	"	Film: <i>Bandhan</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
9	5.30	"	<i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	"	<i>**Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
10	6.00	"	<i>Dharma: Bahiranga O Antaraṅga—I</i> (Bengali): Swami Lokeswarananda
12	6.15	"	<i>*Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
13	5.30	"	<i>**Sāmkhya-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	"	<i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
14	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
16	5.30	"	<i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	"	<i>**Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
17	5.00	"	Vivekananda Study Circle
	6.00	"	<i>Dharma: Bahiranga O Antaraṅga—II</i> (Bengali): Swami Lokeswarananda
19	6.15	"	<i>*Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
20	5.30	"	<i>**Sāmkhya-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	"	<i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
21	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
22	5.30	"	<i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	"	Film: <i>Abhisek</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
23	5.30	"	<i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	"	<i>**Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
24	6.00	"	<i>Tantrer Darśan—I</i> (Bengali): Jahnavi Kumar Chakravarty/Swami Bhairavananda
26	6.15	"	<i>*Bhakti Ratnāvalī</i> (Bengali) : Govinda Gopal Mukherjee
27	5.30	"	<i>**Sāmkhya-Kārikā</i> (English) : Sibajiban Bhattacharyya
	6.15	"	<i>Vivekacūḍāmaṇi</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
28	6.15	"	<i>Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta</i> (Bengali) : Swami Lokeswarananda
29	5.30	"	<i>Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.00	"	Film: <i>Jivan Maran</i> (Bengali) (Rs 1.50; Rs 2.00; and Rs 2.50)
30	5.30	"	<i>Swami Vivekananda's Jñāna-Yoga</i> (English) : Swami Rasajnananda
	6.15	"	<i>**Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> (English) : Swami Lokeswarananda
31	5.00	"	Vivekananda Study Circle (Junior): Recitation, Extempore Speech and Art Competitions among the members of Vivekananda Study Circle (Junior) (Details available at the Children's Library)
	6.00	"	<i>Tantrer Darśan—II</i> (Bengali) : Jahnavi Kumar Chakravarty/Swami Bhairavananda



(Continued from second cover)

attached. The Library specializes in the humanities and social sciences and contains over 1,61,987 books and 428 Indian and foreign journals.

The Library also has a JUNIOR Section with over 5,409 books for children between 13 and 16, and a CHILDREN'S Section with over 12,779 books for children between 6 and 12. Children of both the Sections, constituting Vivekananda Study Circle (Junior), present regular musical and cultural programmes throughout the year.

#### *Research*

Calcutta, Jadavpur, and Burdwan universities recognize the Institute as a centre for learning and research. This entitles the Institute to guide scholars in their post-doctoral and pre-doctoral research. A Board of Studies and Research consisting of distinguished scholars plans and co-ordinates the research activities of the Institute. The Indian Council of Social Science Research, the Indian National Science Academy, Rashtriya Sanskrit Samsthan, and the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi, also recognize the Institute as a centre for research.

#### *Museum and Art Gallery*

The Institute has a small MUSEUM and ART GALLERY to help people, specially scholars from outside India, have a glimpse of Indian art in its diverse forms. It has four major sections: (i) Paintings, (ii) Sculptures, (iii) Folk Arts, and (iv) MSS. Attached to it is the SARADA DEVI SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS and CRAFTS for the members of the Junior and Children's Library.

#### *Publications*

The Institute's publications, including the monthly BULLETIN, represent a further attempt on the part of the Institute to help educate the public about culture in all its aspects. Its major attempt in this direction is *The Cultural Heritage of India*, an encyclopaedic work in eight volumes, six of which have so far been published. The speciality of these volumes is that they

project, for the first time, India's accumulated wisdom in a planned manner with contributions from well-known scholars.

#### *Prayer Room and Chapel*

In keeping with the spirit which animates all its activities, the Institute has a UNIVERSAL PRAYER ROOM, open to all, where people can pray and meditate in the manner they like best. There is also a CHAPEL dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna, the symbol of harmony and unity, where regular devotional services are held in the evenings.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORK OF THE INSTITUTE

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*All correspondence to be addressed to:*

Swami Lokeshwarananda

Secretary

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